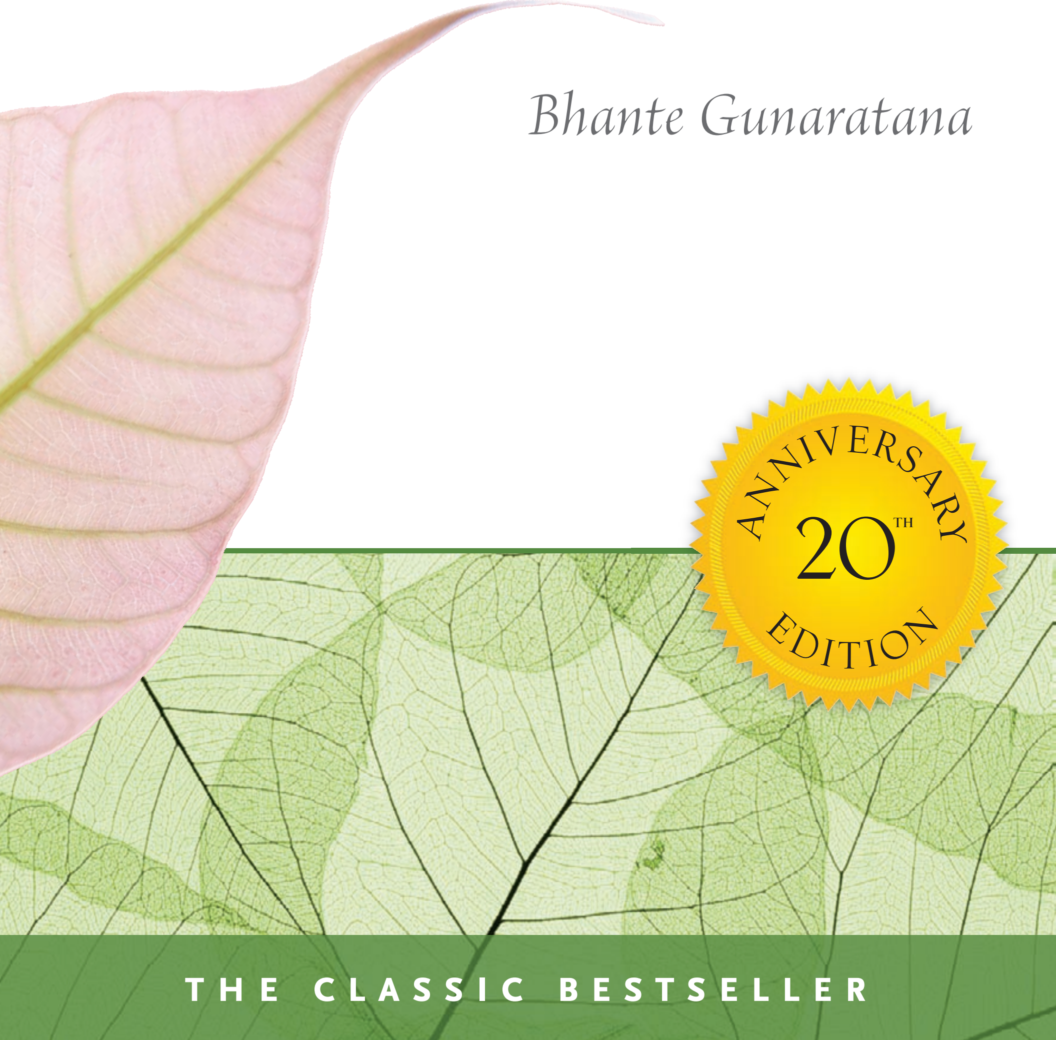
Meditation is to be aware of what is going on: in your body, in your feelings, in your mind, and in the world. Like drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the world earth revolves – slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future; live the actual moment. Only this moment is life. Wherever you are, be there totally. Purification of mind is the basis for mindfulness .

"A MASTERPIECE."—Jon Kabat-Zinn

MINDFULNESS
IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Bhante Gunaratana



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Preface

In my experience, I have found that the most effective way to express something new in a way people can understand is to use the simplest language possible. I have also learned from teaching that the more rigid the language—which is to say, the less it accounts flexibly for the inevitable variety of people's experience—the less effective that teaching is. Who would want to meet with stern and rigid language? Especially when learning something new, especially something we may not normally engage with during daily life. That approach can cause meditation, the practice of mindfulness, to appear as something that you cannot always do. This book presents the antidote to that view! At its heart, this is a straightforward book written in ordinary everyday language—yet within these pages, you'll find rich instructions to begin to discover for yourself the true power of mindfulness in your life, and its many related benefits. I wrote this book in response to the many requests I'd received for just such an introduction. You may find this book an especially useful resource if you are taking up the practice of mindfulness meditation by yourself, without access to a teacher or experienced guide.

In the twenty years since Wisdom Publications first released *Mindfulness in Plain English*, we've seen mindfulness influence more and more aspects of modern society and culture—education, psychotherapy, art, yoga, medicine, and the burgeoning science of the brain. And more and more people seek out mindfulness for any

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number of reasons—to reduce stress; to improve physical and psychological well-being; to be more effective, skillful, and kind in relationships, at work, and throughout their lives.

And I hope that, whatever reasons have brought you to this book or have brought this book to you, you will find within it clear pointers to an incomparably beneficial path.

Bhante Gunaratana

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CHAPTER 1

Meditation: Why Bother?

Meditation is not easy. It takes time and it takes energy. It also takes grit, determination, and discipline. It requires a host of personal qualities that we normally regard as unpleasant and like to avoid whenever possible. We can sum up all of these qualities in the American word *gumption.* Meditation takes gumption. It is certainly a great deal easier just to sit back and watch television. So why bother? Why waste all that time and energy when you could be out enjoying yourself? Why? Simple. Because you are human. Just because of the simple fact that you are human, you find yourself heir to an inherent unsatisfactoriness in life that simply will not go away. You can suppress it from your awareness for a time; you can distract yourself for hours on end, but it always comes back, and usually when you least expect it. All of a sudden, seemingly out of the blue, you sit up, take stock, and realize your actual situation in life.

There you are, and you suddenly realize that you are spending your whole life just barely getting by. You keep up a good front. You manage to make ends meet somehow and look okay from the outside. But those periods of desperation, those times when you feel everything caving in on you—you keep those to yourself. You are a mess, and you know it. But you hide it beautifully. Meanwhile, way down under all of that, you just know that there has to be some other way to live, a better way to look at the world, a way to touch life more fully. You

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click into it by chance now and then: you get a good job. You fall in love. You win the game. For a while, things are different. Life takes on a richness and clarity that makes all the bad times and humdrum fade away. The whole texture of your experience changes and you say to yourself, "Okay, now I've made it; now I will be happy." But then that fades too, like smoke in the wind. You are left with just a memory—that, and the vague awareness that something is wrong.

You feel that there really is a whole other realm of depth and sensitivity available in life; somehow, you are just not seeing it. You wind up feeling cut off. You feel insulated from the sweetness of experience by some sort of sensory cotton. You are not really touching life. You are not "making it" again. Then even that vague awareness fades away, and you are back to the same old reality. The world looks like the usual foul place. It is an emotional roller coaster, and you spend a lot of your time down at the bottom of the ramp, yearning for the heights.

So what is wrong with you? Are you a freak? No. You are just human. And you suffer from the same malady that infects every human being. It is a monster inside all of us, and it has many arms: chronic tension, lack of genuine compassion for others, including the people closest to you, blocked up feelings and emotional deadness—many, many arms. None of us is entirely free from it. We may deny it. We try to suppress it. We build a whole culture around hiding from it, pretending it is not there, and distracting ourselves with goals, projects, and concerns about status. But it never goes away. It is a constant undercurrent in every thought and every perception, a little voice in the back of the mind that keeps saying, "Not good enough yet. Need to have more. Have to make it better. Have to be better." It is a monster, a monster that manifests everywhere in subtle forms.

Go to a party. Listen to the laughter, those brittle-tongued voices that express fun on the surface, and fear underneath. Feel the ten-

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sion, the pressure. Nobody really relaxes. They are faking it. Go to a ball game. Watch the fans in the stand. Watch the irrational fits of anger. Watch the uncontrolled frustration bubbling forth from people that masquerades under the guise of enthusiasm or team spirit. Booing, catcalls, and unbridled egotism in the name of team loyalty, drunkenness, fights in the stands—these are people trying desperately to release tension from within; these are not people who are at peace with themselves. Watch the news on TV. Listen to the lyrics of popular songs. You find the same theme repeated over and over in variations: jealousy, suffering, discontent, and stress.

Life seems to be a perpetual struggle, an enormous effort against staggering odds. And what is our solution to all this dissatisfaction? We get stuck in the "if only" syndrome. If only I had more money, then I would be happy. If only I could find somebody who really loved me; if only I could lose twenty pounds; if only I had a color TV, a hot tub, and curly hair; and on and on forever. Where does all this junk come from, and more important, what can we do about it? It comes from the conditions of our own minds. It is a deep, subtle, and pervasive set of mental habits, a Gordian knot that we have tied bit by bit and that we can only unravel in just that same way, one piece at a time. We can tune up our awareness, dredge up each separate piece, and bring it out into the light. We can make the unconscious conscious, slowly, one piece at a time.

The essence of our experience is change. Change is incessant. Moment by moment life flows by, and it is never the same. Perpetual fluctuation is the essence of the perceptual universe. A thought springs up in your head and half a second later, it is gone. In comes another one, and then that is gone too. A sound strikes your ears, and then silence. Open your eyes and the world pours in, blink and it is gone. People come into your life and go. Friends leave, relatives die. Your fortunes go up, and they go down. Sometimes you win, and just

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as often, you lose. It is incessant: change, change, change; no two moments ever the same.

There is not a thing wrong with this. It is the nature of the universe. But human culture has taught us some odd responses to this endless flowing. We categorize experiences. We try to stick each perception, every mental change in this endless flow, into one of three mental pigeon holes: it is good, bad, or neutral. Then, according to which box we stick it in, we perceive with a set of fixed habitual mental responses. If a particular perception has been labeled "good," then we try to freeze time right there. We grab onto that particular thought, fondle it, hold it, and we try to keep it from escaping. When that does not work, we go all-out in an effort to repeat the experience that caused the thought. Let us call this mental habit "grasping."

Over on the other side of the mind lies the box labeled "bad." When we perceive something "bad," we try to push it away. We try to deny it, reject it, and get rid of it any way we can. We fight against our own experience. We run from pieces of ourselves. Let us call this mental habit "rejecting." Between these two reactions lies the "neutral" box. Here we place the experiences that are neither good nor bad. They are tepid, neutral, uninteresting. We pack experience away in the neutral box so that we can ignore it and thus return our attention to where the action is, namely, our endless round of desire and aversion. So this "neutral" category of experience gets robbed of its fair share of our attention. Let us call this mental habit "ignoring." The direct result of all this lunacy is a perpetual treadmill race to nowhere, endlessly pounding after pleasure, endlessly fleeing from pain, and endlessly ignoring 90 percent of our experience. Then we wonder why life tastes so flat. In the final analysis this system does not work.

No matter how hard you pursue pleasure and success, there are times when you fail. No matter how fast you flee, there are times when pain catches up with you. And in between those times, life is

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so boring you could scream. Our minds are full of opinions and criticisms. We have built walls all around ourselves and are trapped in the prison of our own likes and dislikes. We suffer.

"Suffering" is a big word in Buddhist thought. It is a key term and should be thoroughly understood. The Pali word is *dukkha,* and it does not just mean the agony of the body. It means that deep, subtle sense of dissatisfaction that is a part of every mind moment and that results directly from the mental treadmill. The essence of life is suffering, said the Buddha. At first glance this statement seems exceedingly morbid and pessimistic. It even seems untrue. After all, there are plenty of times when we are happy. Aren't there? No, there are not. It just seems that way. Take any moment when you feel really fulfilled and examine it closely. Down under the joy, you will find that subtle, all-pervasive undercurrent of tension that no matter how great this moment is, it is going to end. No matter how much you just gained, you are inevitably either going to lose some of it or spend the rest of your days guarding what you have and scheming how to get more. And in the end, you are going to die; in the end, you lose everything. It is all transitory.

Sounds pretty bleak, doesn't it? Luckily, it's not—not at all. It only sounds bleak when you view it from the ordinary mental perspective, the very perspective at which the treadmill mechanism operates. Underneath lies another perspective, a completely different way to look at the universe. It is a level of functioning in which the mind does not try to freeze time, does not grasp onto our experience as it flows by, and does not try to block things out and ignore them. It is a level of experience beyond good and bad, beyond pleasure and pain. It is a lovely way to perceive the world, and it is a learnable skill. It is not easy, but it can be learned.

Happiness and peace are really the prime issues in human existence. That is what all of us are seeking. This is often a bit hard to

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see because we cover up those basic goals with layers of surface objectives. We want food, wealth, sex, entertainment, and respect. We even say to ourselves that the idea of "happiness" is too abstract: "Look, I am practical. Just give me enough money and I will buy all the happiness I need." Unfortunately, this is an attitude that does not work. Examine each of these goals and you will find that they are superficial. You want food. Why? Because I am hungry. So you are hungry—so what? Well, if I eat, I won't be hungry, and then I'll feel good. Ah ha! "Feel good": now there is the real item. What we really seek is not the surface goals; those are just means to an end. What we are really after is the feeling of relief that comes when the drive is satisfied. Relief, relaxation, and an end to the tension. Peace, happiness—no more yearning.

So what is this happiness? For most of us, the idea of perfect happiness would be to have everything we wanted and be in control of everything, playing Caesar, making the whole world dance a jig according to our every whim. Once again, it does not work that way. Take a look at the people in history who have actually held this type of power. They were not happy people. Certainly, they were not at peace with themselves. Why not? Because they were driven to control the world totally and absolutely, and they could not. They wanted to control all people, yet there remained people who refused to be controlled. These powerful people could not control the stars. They still got sick. They still had to die.

You can't ever get everything you want. It is impossible. Luckily, there is another option. You can learn to control your mind, to step outside of the endless cycle of desire and aversion. You can learn not to want what you want, to recognize desires but not be controlled by them. This does not mean that you lie down on the road and invite everybody to walk all over you. It means that you continue to live a very normal-looking life, but live from a whole new viewpoint. You do

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the things that a person must do, but you are free from that obsessive, compulsive drivenness of your own desires. You want something, but you don't need to chase after it. You fear something, but you don't need to stand there quaking in your boots. This sort of mental cultivation is very difficult. It takes years. But trying to control everything is impossible; the difficult is preferable to the impossible.

Wait a minute, though. Peace and happiness! Isn't that what civilization is all about? We build skyscrapers and freeways. We have paid vacations, TV sets; we provide free hospitals and sick leaves, Social Security and welfare benefits. All of that is aimed at providing some measure of peace and happiness. Yet the rate of mental illness climbs steadily, and the crime rates rise faster. The streets are crawling with aggressive and unstable individuals. Stick your arms outside the safety of your own door, and somebody is very likely to steal your watch! Something is not working. A happy person does not steal. One who is at peace with him- or herself does not feel driven to kill. We like to think that our society is employing every area of human knowledge in order to achieve peace and happiness, but this is not true.

We are just beginning to realize that we have overdeveloped the material aspects of existence at the expense of the deeper emotional and spiritual aspects, and we are paying the price for that error. It is one thing to talk about degeneration of moral and spiritual fiber in America today, and another thing to actually do something about it. The place to start is within ourselves. Look carefully inside, truthfully and objectively, and each of us will see moments when "I am the delinquent" and "I am the crazy person." We will learn to see those moments, see them clearly, cleanly, and without condemnation, and we will be on our way up and out of being so.

You can't make radical changes in the pattern of your life until you begin to see yourself exactly as you are now. As soon as you do that,

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changes will flow naturally. You don't have to force anything, struggle, or obey rules dictated to you by some authority. It is automatic; you just change. But arriving at that initial insight is quite a task. You have to see who you are and how you are without illusion, judgment, or resistance of any kind. You have to see your place in society and your function as a social being. You have to see your duties and obligations to your fellow human beings, and above all, your responsibility to yourself as an individual living with other individuals. And finally, you have to see all of that clearly as a single unit, an irreducible whole of interrelationship. It sounds complex, but it can occur in a single instant. Mental cultivation through meditation is without rival in helping you achieve this sort of understanding and serene happiness.

The *Dhammapada,* an ancient Buddhist text (which anticipated Freud by thousands of years), says: "What you are now is the result of what you were. What you will be tomorrow will be the result of what you are now. The consequences of an evil mind will follow you like the cart follows the ox that pulls it. The consequences of a purified mind will follow you like your own shadow. No one can do more for you than your own purified mind—no parent, no relative, no friend, no one. A well-disciplined mind brings happiness."

Meditation is intended to purify the mind. It cleanses the thought process of what can be called psychic irritants, things like greed, hatred, and jealousy, which keep you snarled up in emotional bondage. Meditation brings the mind to a state of tranquillity and awareness, a state of concentration and insight.

In our society, we are great believers in education. We believe that knowledge makes a person civilized. Civilization, however, polishes a person only superficially. Subject our noble and sophisticated gentleperson to the stresses of war or economic collapse, and see what happens. It is one thing to obey the law because you know the penal-

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ties and fear the consequences; it is something else entirely to obey the law because you have cleansed yourself from the greed that would make you steal and the hatred that would make you kill. Throw a stone into a stream. The running water would smooth the stone's surface, but the inside remains unchanged. Take that same stone and place it in the intense fires of a forge, and it all melts; the whole stone changes inside and out. Civilization changes a person on the outside. Meditation softens a person from within, through and through.

Meditation is called the Great Teacher. It is the cleansing crucible fire that works slowly but surely, through understanding. The greater your understanding, the more flexible and tolerant, the more compassionate you can be. You become like a perfect parent or an ideal teacher. You are ready to forgive and forget. You feel love toward others because you understand them, and you understand others because you have understood yourself. You have looked deeply inside and seen self-illusion and your own human failings, seen your own humanity and learned to forgive and to love. When you have learned compassion for yourself, compassion for others is automatic. An accomplished meditator has achieved a profound understanding of life, and he or she inevitably relates to the world with a deep and uncritical love.

Meditation is a lot like cultivating a new land. To make a field out of a forest, first you have to clear the trees and pull out the stumps. Then you till the soil and fertilize it, sow your seed, and harvest your crops. To cultivate your mind, first you have to clear out the various irritants that are in the way—pull them right out by the root so that they won't grow back. Then you fertilize: you pump energy and discipline into the mental soil. Then you sow the seed, and harvest your crops of faith, morality, mindfulness, and wisdom.

Faith and morality, by the way, have a special meaning in this

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context. Buddhism does not advocate faith in the sense of believing something because it is written in a book, attributed to a prophet, or taught to you by some authority figure. The meaning of faith here is closer to confidence. It is knowing that something is true because you have seen it work, because you have observed that very thing within yourself. In the same way, morality is not a ritualistic obedience to a code of behavior imposed by an external authority. It is rather a healthy habit pattern that you have consciously and voluntarily chosen to impose upon yourself because you recognize its superiority to your present behavior.

The purpose of meditation is personal transformation. The "you" that goes in one side of the meditation experience is not the same "you" that comes out the other side. Meditation changes your character by a process of sensitization, by making you deeply aware of your own thoughts, words, and deeds. Your arrogance evaporates, and your antagonism dries up. Your mind becomes still and calm. And your life smoothes out. Thus meditation, properly performed, prepares you to meet the ups and downs of existence. It reduces your tension, fear, and worry. Restlessness recedes and passion moderates. Things begin to fall into place, and your life becomes a glide instead of a struggle. All of this happens through understanding.

Meditation sharpens your concentration and your thinking power. Then, piece by piece, your own subconscious motives and mechanics become clear to you. Your intuition sharpens. The precision of your thought increases, and gradually you come to a direct knowledge of things as they really are, without prejudice and without illusion.

So are these reasons enough to bother? Scarcely. These are just promises on paper. There is only one way you will ever know if meditation is worth the effort: learn to do it right, and do it. See for yourself.

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CHAPTER 2

What Meditation Isn't

MEDITATION IS A WORD. You have heard this word before, or you would never have picked up this book. The thinking process operates by association, and all sorts of ideas are associated with the word "meditation." Some of them are probably accurate, and others are hogwash. Some of them pertain more properly to other systems of meditation and have nothing to do with vipassana practice. Before we proceed, it behooves us to blast some of that residue out of our neuron circuits so that new information can pass unimpeded. Let us start with some of the most obvious stuff.

We are not going to teach you to contemplate your navel or to chant secret syllables. You are not conquering demons or harnessing invisible energies. There are no colored belts given for your performance, and you don't have to shave your head or wear a turban. You don't even have to give away all your belongings and move to a monastery. In fact, unless your life is immoral and chaotic, you can probably get started right away and make some progress. Sounds fairly encouraging, wouldn't you say?

There are many books on the subject of meditation. Most of them are written from a point of view that lies squarely within one particular religious or philosophical tradition, and many of the authors have not bothered to point this out. They make statements about meditation that sound like general laws but are actually highly

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specific procedures exclusive to that particular system of practice. Worse yet is the panoply of complex theories and interpretations available, often at odds with one another. The result is a real mess: an enormous jumble of conflicting opinions accompanied by a mass of extraneous data. This book is specific. We are dealing exclusively with the vipassana system of meditation. We are going to teach you to watch the functioning of your own mind in a calm and detached manner so you can gain insight into your own behavior. The goal is awareness, an awareness so intense, concentrated, and finely tuned that you will be able to pierce the inner workings of reality itself.

There are a number of common misconceptions about meditation. We see the same questions crop up again and again from new students. It is best to deal with these things at once, because they are the sort of preconceptions that can block your progress right from the outset. We are going to take these misconceptions one at a time and dissolve them.

MISCONCEPTION 1: MEDITATION IS JUST A RELAXATION TECHNIQUE.

The bugaboo here is the word *just*. Relaxation is a key component of meditation, but vipassana-style meditation aims at a much loftier goal. The statement is essentially true for many other systems of meditation. All meditation procedures stress concentration of the mind, bringing the mind to rest on one item or one area of thought. Do it strongly and thoroughly enough, and you achieve a deep and blissful relaxation, called *jhana*. It is a state of such supreme tranquillity that it amounts to rapture, a form of pleasure that lies above and beyond anything that can be experienced in the normal state of consciousness. Most systems stop right there. *Jhana* is the goal, and when you attain that, you simply repeat the experience for the rest of your life. Not so

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with vipassana meditation. Vipassana seeks another goal: awareness. Concentration and relaxation are considered necessary concomitants to awareness. They are required precursors, handy tools, and beneficial byproducts. But they are not the goal. The goal is insight. Vipassana meditation is a profound religious practice aimed at nothing less than the purification and transformation of your everyday life. We will deal more thoroughly with the differences between concentration and insight in chapter 14.

Misconception 2: Meditation means going into a trance.

Here again the statement could be applied accurately to certain systems of meditation, but not to vipassana. Insight meditation is not a form of hypnosis. You are not trying to black out your mind so as to become unconscious, or trying to turn yourself into an emotionless vegetable. If anything, the reverse is true: you will become more and more attuned to your own emotional changes. You will learn to know yourself with ever greater clarity and precision. In learning this technique, certain states do occur that may appear trancelike to the observer. But they are really quite the opposite. In hypnotic trance, the subject is susceptible to control by another party, whereas in deep concentration, the meditator remains very much under his or her own control. The similarity is superficial, and in any case, the occurrence of these phenomena is not the point of vipassana. As we have said, the deep concentration of *jhana* is simply a tool or stepping stone on the route to heightened awareness. Vipassana, by definition, is the cultivation of mindfulness or awareness. If you find that you are becoming unconscious in meditation, then you aren't meditating, according to the definition of that word as used in the vipassana system.

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Misconception 3: Meditation is a mysterious practice that cannot be understood.

Here again, this is almost true, but not quite. Meditation deals with levels of consciousness that lie deeper than conceptual thought. Therefore, some of the experiences of meditation just won't fit into words. That does not mean, however, that meditation cannot be understood. There are deeper ways to understand things than by the use of words. You understand how to walk. You probably can't describe the exact order in which your nerve fibers and your muscles contract during that process. But you know how to do it. Meditation needs to be understood that same way—by doing it. It is not something that you can learn in abstract terms, or something to be talked about. It is something to be experienced. Meditation is not a mindless formula that gives automatic and predictable results; you can never really predict exactly what will come up during any particular session. It is an investigation and an experiment, an adventure every time. In fact, this is so true that when you do reach a feeling of predictability and sameness in your practice, you can read that as an indication that you have gotten off track and are headed for stagnation. Learning to look at each second as if it were the first and only second in the universe is essential in vipassana meditation.

Misconception 4: The purpose of meditation is to become psychic.

No. The purpose of meditation is to develop awareness. Learning to read minds is not the point. Levitation is not the goal. The goal is liberation. There is a link between psychic phenomena and meditation, but the relationship is complex. During early stages of the meditator's career, such phenomena may or may not arise. Some people may

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experience some intuitive understanding or memories from past lives; others do not. In any case, these phenomena are not regarded as well-developed and reliable psychic abilities, and they should not be given undue importance. Such phenomena are in fact fairly dangerous to new meditators in that they are quite seductive. They can be an ego trap, luring you right off the track. Your best approach is not to place any emphasis on these phenomena. If they come up, that's fine. If they don't, that's fine, too. There is a point in the meditator's career where he or she may practice special exercises to develop psychic powers. But this occurs far down the line. Only after the meditator has reached a very deep stage of *jhana* will he or she be advanced enough to work with such powers without the danger of their running out of control or taking over his or her life. The meditator will then develop them strictly for the purpose of service to others. In most cases, this state of affairs occurs only after decades of practice. Don't worry about it. Just concentrate on developing more and more awareness. If voices and visions pop up, just notice them and let them go. Don't get involved.

MISCONCEPTION 5: MEDITATION IS DANGEROUS, AND A PRUDENT PERSON SHOULD AVOID IT.

Everything is dangerous. Walk across the street and you may get hit by a bus. Take a shower and you could break your neck. Meditate, and you will probably dredge up various nasty matters from your past. The suppressed material that has been buried for quite some time can be scary. But exploring it is also highly profitable. No activity is entirely without risk, but that does not mean that we should wrap ourselves in a protective cocoon. That is not living, but is premature death. The way to deal with danger is to know approximately how much of it there is, where it is likely to be found, and how to deal

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with it when it arises. That is the purpose of this manual. Vipassana is development of awareness. That in itself is not dangerous; on the contrary, increased awareness is a safeguard against danger. Properly done, meditation is a very gentle and gradual process. Take it slow and easy, and the development of your practice will occur very naturally. Nothing should be forced. Later, when you are under the close scrutiny and protective wisdom of a competent teacher, you can accelerate your rate of growth by taking a period of intensive meditation. In the beginning, though, easy does it. Work gently and everything will be fine.

MISCONCEPTION 6: MEDITATION IS FOR SAINTS AND SADHUS, NOT FOR REGULAR PEOPLE.

This attitude is very prevalent in Asia, where monks and holy men are accorded an enormous amount of ritualized reverence, somewhat akin to the American attitude of idolizing movie stars and baseball heroes. Such people are stereotyped, made larger than life, and saddled with all sorts of characteristics that few human beings can ever live up to. Even in the West, we share some of this attitude about meditation. We expect the meditator to be an extraordinarily pious figure in whose mouth butter would never dare to melt. A little personal contact with such people will quickly dispel this illusion. They usually prove to be people of enormous energy and gusto, who live their lives with amazing vigor.

It is true, of course, that most holy men meditate, but they don't meditate because they are holy men. That is backward. They are holy men *because* they meditate; meditation is how they got there. And they started meditating before they became holy, otherwise they would not be holy. This is an important point. A sizable number of students seems to feel that a person should be completely moral

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before beginning to meditate. It is an unworkable strategy. Morality requires a certain degree of mental control as a prerequisite. You can't follow any set of moral precepts without at least a little self-control, and if your mind is perpetually spinning like a fruit cylinder in a slot machine, self-control is highly unlikely. So mental culture has to come first.

There are three integral factors in Buddhist meditation—morality, concentration, and wisdom. These three factors grow together as your practice deepens. Each one influences the other, so you cultivate the three of them at once, not separately. When you have the wisdom to truly understand a situation, compassion toward all parties involved is automatic, and compassion means that you automatically restrain yourself from any thought, word, or deed that might harm yourself or others; thus, your behavior is automatically moral. It is only when you don't understand things deeply that you create problems. If you fail to see the consequences of your actions, you will blunder. The person who waits to become totally moral before he begins to meditate is waiting for a situation that will never arise. The ancient sages say this person is like a man waiting for the ocean to become calm so that he can take a bath.

To understand this relationship more fully, let us propose that there are levels of morality. The lowest level is adherence to a set of rules and regulations laid down by somebody else. It could be your favorite prophet. It could be the state, the head of your tribe, or a parent. No matter who generates the rules, all you have to do at this level is know the rules and follow them. A robot can do that. Even a trained chimpanzee could do it, if the rules were simple enough and he were smacked with a stick every time he broke one. This level requires no meditation at all. All you need are the rules and somebody to swing the stick.

The next level of morality consists of obeying the same rules even

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in the absence of somebody who will smack you. You obey because you have internalized the rules. You smack yourself every time you break one. This level requires a bit of mind control. But if your thought pattern is chaotic, your behavior will be chaotic, too. Mental cultivation reduces mental chaos.

There is a third level of morality, which might better be termed as "ethics." This level is a quantum leap up the scale from the first two levels, a complete shift in orientation. At the level of ethics, a person does not follow hard and fast rules dictated by authority. A person chooses to follow a path dictated by mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion. This level requires real intelligence, and an ability to juggle all the factors in every situation to arrive at a unique, creative, and appropriate response each time. Furthermore, the individual making these decisions needs to have dug him- or herself out of a limited personal viewpoint. The person has to see the entire situation from an objective point of view, giving equal weight to his or her own needs and those of others. In other words, he or she has to be free from greed, hatred, envy, and all the other selfish junk that ordinarily keeps us from seeing the other person's side of the issue. Only then can he or she choose the precise set of actions that will be truly optimal for that situation. This level of morality absolutely demands meditation, unless you were born a saint. There is no other way to acquire the skill. Furthermore, the sorting process required at this level is exhausting. If you tried to juggle all those factors in every situation with your conscious mind, you'd overload yourself. The intellect just can't keep that many balls in the air at once. Luckily, a deeper level of consciousness can do this sort of processing with ease. Meditation can accomplish the sorting process for you. It is an eerie feeling.

One day you've got a problem—let's say, to handle Uncle Herman's latest divorce. It looks absolutely unsolvable, an enormous muddle

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of "maybes" that would give King Solomon himself a headache. The next day you are washing the dishes, thinking about something else entirely, and suddenly the solution is there. It just pops out of the deep mind, and you say, "Ah ha!" and the whole thing is solved. This sort of intuition can only occur when you disengage the logic circuits from the problem and give the deep mind the opportunity to cook up the solution. The conscious mind just gets in the way. Meditation teaches you how to disentangle yourself from the thought process. It is the mental art of stepping out of your own way, and that's a pretty useful skill in everyday life. Meditation is certainly not an irrelevant practice strictly for ascetics and hermits. It is a practical skill that focuses on everyday events and has immediate applications in everybody's life. Meditation is not "other-worldly."

Unfortunately, this very fact constitutes the drawback for certain students. They enter the practice expecting instantaneous cosmic revelation, complete with angelic choirs. What they usually get is a more efficient way to take out the trash and better ways to deal with Uncle Herman. They are needlessly disappointed. The trash solution comes first. The voices of archangels take a bit longer.

Misconception 7: Meditation is running away from reality.

Incorrect. Meditation is running straight into reality. It does not insulate you from the pain of life but rather allows you to delve so deeply into life and all its aspects that you pierce the pain barrier and go beyond suffering. Vipassana is a practice done with the specific intention of facing reality, to fully experience life just as it is and to cope with exactly what you find. It allows you to blow aside the illusions and free yourself from all the polite little lies you tell yourself all the time. What is there is there. You are who you are, and lying to

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yourself about your own weaknesses and motivations only binds you tighter to them. Vipassana meditation is not an attempt to forget yourself or to cover up your troubles. It is learning to look at yourself exactly as you are to see what is there and accept it fully. Only then can you change it.

Misconception 8: Meditation is a great way to get high.

Well, yes and no. Meditation does produce lovely blissful feelings sometimes. But they are not the purpose, and they don't always occur. Furthermore, if you do meditation with that purpose in mind, they are less likely to occur than if you just meditate for the actual purpose of meditation, which is increased awareness. Bliss results from relaxation, and relaxation results from release of tension. Seeking bliss from meditation introduces tension into the process, which blows the whole chain of events. It is a Catch-22: you can only experience bliss if you don't chase after it. Euphoria is not the purpose of meditation. It will often arise, but should be regarded as a byproduct. Still, it is a very pleasant side effect, and it becomes more and more frequent the longer you meditate. You won't hear any disagreement about this from advanced practitioners.

Misconception 9: Meditation is selfish.

It certainly looks that way. There sits the meditator parked on a little cushion. Is she out donating blood? No. Is she busy working with disaster victims? No. But let us examine her motivation. Why is she doing this? The meditator's intention is to purge her own mind of anger, prejudice, and ill will, and she is actively engaged in the process of getting rid of greed, tension, and insensitivity. Those are

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the very items that obstruct her compassion for others. Until they are gone, any good works that she does are likely to be just an extension of her own ego, and of no real help in the long run. Harm in the name of help is one of the oldest games. The grand inquisitor of the Spanish Inquisition spouted the loftiest of motives. The Salem witchcraft trials were conducted for the "public good." Examine the personal lives of advanced meditators, and you will often find them engaged in humanitarian service. You will seldom find them as crusading missionaries who are willing to sacrifice certain individuals for the sake of a supposedly pious idea. The fact is that we are more selfish than we know. The ego has a way of turning the loftiest activities into trash if it is allowed free range. Through meditation, we become aware of ourselves exactly as we are, by waking up to the numerous subtle ways that we act out our own selfishness. Then we truly begin to be genuinely selfless. Cleansing yourself of selfishness is not a selfish activity.

MISCONCEPTION 10: WHEN YOU MEDITATE, YOU SIT AROUND THINKING LOFTY THOUGHTS.

Wrong again. There are certain systems of contemplation in which this sort of thing is done. But that is not vipassana. Vipassana is the practice of awareness, awareness of whatever is there, be it supreme truth or trivial trash. What is there, is there. Of course, lofty thoughts may arise during your practice. They are certainly not to be avoided. Neither are they to be sought. They are just pleasant side effects. Vipassana is a simple practice. It consists of experiencing your own life events directly, without preferences and without mental images pasted onto them. Vipassana is seeing your life unfold from moment to moment without biases. What comes up, comes up. It is very simple.

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Misconception 11: A couple of weeks of meditation and all my problems will go away.

Sorry, meditation is not a quick cure-all. You will start seeing changes right away, but really profound effects are years down the line. That is just the way the universe is constructed. Nothing worthwhile is achieved overnight. Meditation is tough in some respects, requiring a long discipline and a sometimes painful process of practice. At each sitting you gain some results, but they are often very subtle. They occur deep within the mind, and only manifest much later. And if you are sitting there constantly looking for huge, instantaneous changes, you will miss the subtle shifts altogether. You will get discouraged, give up, and swear that no such changes could ever occur. Patience is the key. Patience. If you learn nothing else from meditation, you will learn patience. Patience is essential for any profound change.

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CHAPTER 3

What Meditation Is

Meditation is a word, and words are used in different ways by different speakers. This may seem like a trivial point, but it is not. It is quite important to distinguish exactly what a particular speaker means by the words he or she uses. Probably every culture on earth has produced some sort of mental practice that could be termed meditation. It all depends on how loose a definition you give to that word. The techniques worldwide are enormously varied, but we will make no attempt to survey them. There are other books for that. For the purpose of this volume, we will restrict our discussion to those practices best known to Western audiences and most often associated with the term meditation.

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition we find two overlapping practices called prayer and contemplation. Prayer is a direct address to a spiritual entity. Contemplation is a prolonged period of conscious thought about a specific topic, usually a religious ideal or scriptural passage. From the standpoint of mental cultivation, both of these activities are exercises in concentration. The normal deluge of conscious thought is restricted, and the mind is brought to one conscious area of operation. The results are those you find in any concentrative practice: deep calm, a physiological slowing of the metabolism, and a sense of peace and well-being.

Out of the Hindu tradition comes yogic meditation, which is also

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purely concentrative. The traditional basic exercises consist of focusing the mind on a single object—a stone, a candle flame, a syllable, or whatever—and not allowing it to wander. Having acquired the basic skill, the yogi proceeds to expand his practice by taking on more complex objects of meditation—chants, colorful religious images, energy channels in the body, and so forth. Still, no matter how complex the object of meditation, the meditation itself remains purely an exercise in concentration.

Within the Buddhist tradition, concentration is also highly valued. But a new element is added and more highly stressed: the element of awareness. All Buddhist meditation aims at the development of awareness, using concentration as a tool toward that end. The Buddhist tradition is very wide, however, and there are several diverse routes to this goal. Zen meditation uses two separate tacks. The first is the direct plunge into awareness by sheer force of will. You sit down and you just sit, meaning that you toss out of your mind everything except pure awareness of sitting. This sounds very simple. It is not. (A brief trial will demonstrate just how difficult it really is.) The second Zen approach, used in the Rinzai school, is that of tricking the mind out of conscious thought and into pure awareness. This is done by giving a student an unsolvable riddle, which he must solve nonetheless, and by placing him in a horrendous training situation. Since he cannot escape from the pain of the situation, he must flee into a pure experience of the moment: there is nowhere else to go. Zen is tough. It is effective for many people, but it is really tough.

Another stratagem, tantric Buddhism, is nearly the reverse. Conscious thought, at least the way we usually do it, is the manifestation of ego, the "you" that you usually think that you are. Conscious thought is tightly connected with self-concept. The self-concept or ego is nothing more than a set of reactions and mental images that are artificially pasted to the flowing process of pure awareness.

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Tantra seeks to obtain pure awareness by destroying this ego image. This is accomplished by a process of visualization. The student is given a particular religious image to meditate upon, for example, one of the deities from the tantric pantheon. She does this in so thorough a fashion that she becomes that entity. She takes off her own identity and puts on another. This takes a while, as you might imagine, but it works. During the process, she is able to watch the way in which the ego is constructed and put in place. She comes to recognize the arbitrary nature of all egos, including her own, and she escapes from bondage to the ego. She is left in a state where she may have an ego if she so chooses—either her own or whichever other she might wish—or she can do without one. Result: pure awareness. Tantra is not exactly a piece of cake either.

Vipassana is the oldest of Buddhist meditation practices. The method comes directly from the *Satipatthana Sutta,* a discourse attributed to the Buddha himself. Vipassana is a direct and gradual cultivation of mindfulness or awareness. It proceeds piece by piece over a period of years. One's attention is carefully directed to an intense examination of certain aspects of one's own existence. The meditator is trained to notice more and more of the flow of life experience. Vipassana is a gentle technique, but it also is very, very thorough. It is an ancient and codified system of training your mind, a set of exercises dedicated to the purpose of becoming more and more aware of your own life experience. It is attentive listening, mindful seeing, and careful testing. We learn to smell acutely, to touch fully, and really pay attention to the changes taking place in all these experiences. We learn to listen to our own thoughts without being caught up in them.

The object of vipassana practice is to learn to see the truths of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness of phenomena. We think we are doing this already, but that is an illusion. It comes

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from the fact that we are paying so little attention to the ongoing surge of our own life experiences that we might just as well be asleep. We are simply not paying enough attention to notice that we are not paying attention. It is another Catch-22.

Through the process of mindfulness, we slowly become aware of what we really are, down below the ego image. We wake up to what life really is. It is not just a parade of ups and downs, lollipops and smacks on the wrist. That is an illusion. Life has a much deeper texture than that if we bother to look, and if we look in the right way.

Vipassana is a form of mental training that will teach you to experience the world in an entirely new way. You will learn for the first time what is truly happening to you, around you, and within you. It is a process of self-discovery, a participatory investigation in which you observe your own experiences while participating in them. The practice must be approached with this attitude: "Never mind what I have been taught. Forget about theories and prejudices and stereotypes. I want to understand the true nature of life. I want to know what this experience of being alive really is. I want to apprehend the true and deepest qualities of life, and I don't want to just accept somebody else's explanation. I want to see it for myself."

If you pursue your meditation practice with this attitude, you will succeed. You'll find yourself observing things objectively, exactly as they are—flowing and changing from moment to moment. Life then takes on an unbelievable richness that cannot be described. It has to be experienced.

The Pali term for insight meditation is *vipassana bhavana. Bhavana* comes from the root *bhu,* which means to grow or to become. Therefore *bhavana* means to cultivate, and the word is always used in reference to the mind; *bhavana* means mental cultivation. *Vipassana* is derived from two roots. *Passana* means seeing or perceiving. *Vi* is a prefix with a complex set of connotations that can be roughly

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translated as "in a special way," and also *into* and *through* "a special way." The whole meaning of the word *vipassana* is looking into something with clarity and precision, seeing each component as distinct, and piercing all the way through to perceive the most fundamental reality of that thing. This process leads to insight into the basic reality of whatever is being examined. Put these words together and *vipassana bhavana* means the cultivation of the mind toward the aim of seeing in the special way that leads to insight and full understanding.

In vipassana meditation we cultivate this special way of seeing life. We train ourselves to see reality exactly as it is, and we call this special mode of perception *mindfulness.* This process of mindfulness is really quite different from what we usually do. We usually do not look into what is actually there in front of us. We see life through a screen of thoughts and concepts, and we mistake those mental objects for reality. We get so caught up in this endless thought-stream that reality flows by unnoticed. We spend our time engrossed in activity, caught up in an eternal pursuit of pleasure and gratification and eternal flight from pain and unpleasantness. We spend all of our energies trying to make ourselves feel better, trying to bury our fears, endlessly seeking security. Meanwhile, the world of real experience flows by untouched and untasted. In vipassana meditation we train ourselves to ignore the constant impulses to be more comfortable, and we dive into reality instead. The irony of it is that real peace comes only when you stop chasing it—another Catch-22.

When you relax your driving desire for comfort, real fulfillment arises. When you drop your hectic pursuit of gratification, the real beauty of life comes out. When you seek to know reality without illusion, complete with all its pain and danger, real freedom and security will be yours. This is not a doctrine we are trying to drill into you; it is an observable reality, something you can and should see for yourself.

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Buddhism is 2,500 years old, and any thought system of such vintage has time to develop layers and layers of doctrine and ritual. Nevertheless, the fundamental attitude of Buddhism is intensely empirical and antiauthoritarian. Gotama the Buddha was a highly unorthodox individual and a real antitraditionalist. He did not offer his teaching as a set of dogmas, but rather as a set of propositions for each individual to investigate for him- or herself. His invitation to one and all was, "Come and see." One of the things he said to his followers was, "Place no head above your own." By this he meant, don't just accept somebody else's word. See for yourself.

We want you to apply this attitude to every word you read in this manual. We are not making statements that you should accept merely because we are authorities in the field. Blind faith has nothing to do with this. These are experiential realities. Learn to adjust your mode of perception according to instructions given in the book, and you will see for yourself. That, and only that, will provide grounds for your faith. Essentially, insight meditation is a practice of investigative personal discovery.

Having said this, we will present here a very short synopsis of some of the key points of Buddhist philosophy. We make no attempt to be thorough, since that has been quite nicely done in many other books. But since this material is essential to understanding vipassana, some mention must be made.

From the Buddhist point of view, we human beings live in a very peculiar fashion. We view impermanent things as permanent, though everything is changing all around us. The process of change is constant and eternal. Even as you read these words, your body is aging. But you pay no attention to that. The book in your hand is decaying. The print is fading, and the pages are becoming brittle. The walls around you are aging. The molecules within those walls are vibrating at an enormous rate, and everything is shifting, going to pieces,

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and slowly dissolving. You pay no attention to that either. Then one day you look around you. Your skin is wrinkled and your joints ache. The book is a yellowed, faded thing; and the building is falling apart. So you pine for lost youth, cry when your possessions are gone. Where does this pain come from? It comes from your own inattention. You failed to look closely at life. You failed to observe the constantly shifting flow of the world as it passed by. You set up a collection of mental constructions—"me," "the book," "the building"—and you assumed that those were solid, real entities. You assumed that they would endure forever. They never do. But now you can tune into the constant change. You can learn to perceive your life as an ever-flowing movement. You can learn to see the continuous flow of all conditioned things. You can. It is just a matter of time and training.

Our human perceptual habits are remarkably stupid in some ways. We tune out 99 percent of all the sensory stimuli we actually receive, and we solidify the remainder into discrete mental objects. Then we react to those mental objects in programmed, habitual ways.

An example: There you are, sitting alone in the stillness of a peaceful night. A dog barks in the distance, which, in itself, is neither good nor bad. Up out of that sea of silence come surging waves of sonic vibration. You start to hear the lovely complex patterns, and they are turned into scintillating electronic stimulations within the nervous system. The process should be used as an experience of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness. We humans tend to ignore it totally. Instead, we solidify that perception into a mental object. We paste a mental picture on it and launch into a series of emotional and conceptual reactions to it. "There is that dog again. He is always barking at night. What a nuisance. Every night he is a real bother. Somebody should do something. Maybe I should call a cop. No, a dog catcher—I'll call the pound. No, maybe I'll just write a

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nasty letter to the guy who owns that dog. No, too much trouble. I'll just get ear plugs." These are just perceptual mental habits. You learn to respond this way as a child by copying the perceptual habits of those around you. These perceptual responses are not inherent in the structure of the nervous system. The circuits are there, but this is not the only way that our mental machinery can be used. That which has been learned can be unlearned. The first step is to realize what you are doing as you are doing it, to stand back and quietly watch.

From the Buddhist perspective, we humans have a backward view of life. We look at what is actually the cause of suffering and see it as happiness. The cause of suffering is that desire-aversion syndrome that we spoke of earlier. Up pops a perception. It could be anything—an attractive woman, a handsome guy, a speedboat, the aroma of baking bread, a truck tailgating you, anything. Whatever it is, the very next thing we do is to react to the stimulus with a feeling about it.

For example, take worry. We worry a lot. Worry itself is the problem. Worry is a process; it has steps. Anxiety is not just a state of existence but a procedure. What you've got to do is to look at the very beginning of that procedure, those initial stages before the process has built up a head of steam. The very first link of the worry chain is the grasping-rejecting reaction. As soon as a phenomenon pops into the mind, we try mentally to grab onto it or push it away. That sets the worry response in motion. Luckily, there is a handy little tool called vipassana meditation that you can use to short-circuit the whole mechanism.

Vipassana meditation teaches us how to scrutinize our own perceptual process with great precision. We learn to watch the arising of thought and perception with a feeling of serene detachment. We learn to view our own reactions to stimuli with calmness and clarity. We begin to see ourselves reacting without getting caught up in the reactions themselves. The obsessive nature of thought slowly

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dies. We can still get married. We can still get out of the path of the truck. But we don't need to go through hell over either one.

This escape from the obsessive nature of thought produces a whole new view of reality. It is a complete paradigm shift, a total change in the perceptual mechanism. It brings with it the bliss of emancipation from obsessions. Because of these advantages, Buddhism views this way of looking at things as a correct view of life; Buddhist texts call it seeing things as they really are.

Vipassana meditation is a set of training procedures that gradually open us to this new view of reality as it truly is. Along with this new reality goes a new view of that most central aspect of reality: "me." A close inspection reveals that we have done the same thing to "me" that we have done to all other perceptions. We have taken a flowing vortex of thought, feeling, and sensation and solidified that into a mental construct. Then we have stuck a label onto it: "me." Forever after, we treat it as if it were a static and enduring entity. We view it as a thing separate from all other things. We pinch ourselves off from the rest of that process of eternal change that is the universe, and then we grieve over how lonely we feel. We ignore our inherent connectedness to all other beings and decide that "I" have to get more for "me"; then we marvel at how greedy and insensitive human beings are. And on it goes. Every evil deed, every example of heartlessness in the world, stems directly from this false sense of "me" as distinct from everything else.

If you explode the illusion of that one concept, your whole universe changes. Don't expect to be able to do this overnight, though. You spent your whole life building up that concept, reinforcing it with every thought, word, and deed over all those years. It is not going to evaporate instantly. But it will pass if you give it enough time and attention. Vipassana meditation is a process by which that concept is dissolved. Little by little, you chip away at it, just by observing it.

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The "I" concept is a process. It is something we are constantly doing. With vipassana we learn to see that we are doing it, when we are doing it, and how we are doing it. Then that mindset moves and fades away, like a cloud passing through a clear sky. We are left in a state where we can decide to do it or not, whichever seems appropriate to the situation. The compulsiveness is gone: now we have a choice.

These are all major insights. Each one is a deep-reaching understanding of one of the fundamental issues of human existence. They do not occur quickly, nor without considerable effort. But the payoff is big. They lead to a total transformation of your life. Every second of your existence thereafter is changed. The meditator who pushes all the way down this track achieves perfect mental health, a pure love for all that lives, and complete cessation of suffering. That is no small goal. But you don't have to go the whole way to reap benefits. The benefits start right away, and they pile up over the years. It is a cumulative function: the more you sit, the more you learn about the real nature of your own existence. The more hours you spend in meditation, the greater your ability to calmly observe every impulse and intention, thought and emotion, just as it arises in the mind. Your progress to liberation is measured in hours on the cushion. And you can stop during the process any time you feel you've had enough. There is no mandating rule but your own desire to see the true quality of life, to enhance your own existence and that of others.

Vipassana meditation is inherently experiential, not theoretical. In the practice of meditation you become sensitive to the actual experience of living, to how things actually feel. You do not sit around developing sublime thoughts about living. You live. Vipassana meditation, more than anything else, is learning to live.

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CHAPTER 4

Attitude

WITHIN THE LAST CENTURY, Western science has made a startling discovery: We are part of the world we view. The very process of our observation changes the things we observe. For example, an electron is an extremely tiny item. It cannot be viewed without instrumentation, and that apparatus dictates what the observer will see. If you look at an electron in one particular way, it appears to be a particle, a hard little ball that bounces around in nice straight paths. When you view it another way, an electron appears to be a wave form, glowing and wiggling all over the place, with nothing solid about it at all. An electron is an event more than a thing, and the observer participates in that event by the very act of his or her observation. There is no way to avoid this interaction.

Eastern science has recognized this basic principle for a very long time. The mind itself is a set of events, and you participate in those events every time you look inward. Meditation is participatory observation: What you are looking at responds to the process of looking. In this case, what you are looking at is you, and what you see depends on how you look. Thus, the process of meditation is extremely delicate, and the result depends absolutely on the state of mind of the meditator. The following attitudes are essential to success in practice; most of them have already been presented, but we bring them together again here as a series of rules for application:

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1) *Don't expect anything.* Just sit back and see what happens. Treat the whole thing as an experiment. Take an active interest in the test itself, but don't get distracted by your expectations about the results. For that matter, don't be anxious for any result whatsoever. Let the meditation move along at its own speed and in its own direction. Let the meditation teach you. Meditative awareness seeks to see reality exactly as it is. Whether that corresponds to our expectations or not, it does require a temporary suspension of all of our preconceptions and ideas. We must store our images, opinions, and interpretations out of the way for the duration of the session. Otherwise we will stumble over them.

2) *Don't strain.* Don't force anything or make grand, exaggerated efforts. Meditation is not aggressive. There is no place or need for violent striving. Just let your effort be relaxed and steady.

3) *Don't rush.* There is no hurry, so take your time. Settle yourself on a cushion and sit as though you have the whole day. Anything really valuable takes time to develop. Patience, patience, patience.

4) *Don't cling to anything, and don't reject anything.* Let come what comes, and accommodate yourself to that, whatever it is. If good mental images arise, that is fine. If bad mental images arise, that is fine, too. Look on all of it as equal, and make yourself comfortable with whatever happens. Don't fight with what you experience, just observe it all mindfully.

5) *Let go.* Learn to flow with all the changes that come up. Loosen up and relax.

6) *Accept everything that arises.* Accept your feelings, even the ones

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you wish you did not have. Accept your experiences, even the ones you hate. Don't condemn yourself for having human flaws and failings. Learn to see all the phenomena in the mind as being perfectly natural and understandable. Try to exercise a disinterested acceptance at all times with respect to everything you experience.

7) *Be gentle with yourself.* Be kind to yourself. You may not be perfect, but you are all you've got to work with. The process of becoming who you will be begins first with the total acceptance of who you are.

8) *Investigate yourself.* Question everything. Take nothing for granted. Don't believe anything because it sounds wise and pious and some holy man said it. See for yourself. That does not mean that you should be cynical, impudent, or irreverent. It means you should be empirical. Subject all statements to the actual test of your own experience, and let the results be your guide to truth. Insight meditation evolves out of an inner longing to wake up to what is real and to gain liberating insight into the true structure of existence. The entire practice hinges upon this desire to be awake to the truth. Without it, the practice is superficial.

9) *View all problems as challenges.* Look upon negativities that arise as opportunities to learn and to grow. Don't run from them, condemn yourself, or bury your burden in saintly silence. You have a problem? Great. More grist for the mill. Rejoice, dive in, and investigate.

10) *Don't ponder.* You don't need to figure everything out. Discursive thinking won't free you from the trap. In meditation, the mind is purified naturally by mindfulness, by wordless bare attention. Habitual deliberation is not necessary to eliminate those things that

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are keeping you in bondage. All that is necessary is a clear, nonconceptual perception of what they are and how they work. That alone is sufficient to dissolve them. Concepts and reasoning just get in the way. Don't think. See.

11) *Don't dwell upon contrasts.* Differences do exist between people, but dwelling upon them is a dangerous process. Unless carefully handled, this leads directly to egotism. Ordinary human thinking is full of greed, jealousy, and pride. A man seeing another man on the street may immediately think, "He is better looking than I am." The instant result is envy or shame. A girl seeing another girl may think, "I am prettier than she is." The instant result is pride. This sort of comparison is a mental habit, and it leads directly to ill feeling of one sort or another: greed, envy, pride, jealousy, or hatred. It is an unskillful mental state, but we do it all the time. We compare our looks with others, our success, accomplishments, wealth, possessions, or IQ, and all of this leads to the same state—estrangement, barriers between people, and ill feeling.

The meditator's job is to cancel this unskillful habit by examining it thoroughly, and then replacing it with another. Rather than noticing the differences between oneself and others, the meditator trains him- or herself to notice the similarities. She centers her attention on those factors that are universal to all life, things that will move her closer to others. Then her comparisons, if any, lead to feelings of kinship rather than of estrangement.

Breathing is a universal process. All vertebrates breathe in essentially the same manner. All living things exchange gases with their environment in some way or other. This is one of the reasons that breathing has been chosen as a focus of meditation. The meditator is advised to explore the process of his or her own breathing as a vehicle for realizing our inherent connectedness with the rest of life. This

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does not mean that we shut our eyes to all the differences around us. Differences do exist. It means simply that we de-emphasize contrasts and emphasize the universal factors that we have in common.

The recommended procedure is as follows: When we as meditators perceive any sensory object, we are not to dwell upon it in the ordinary egoistic way. We should rather examine the very process of perception itself. We should watch what that object does to our senses and our perception. We should watch the feelings that arise and the mental activities that follow. We should note the changes that occur in our own consciousness as a result. In watching all these phenomena, we must be aware of the universality of what we are seeing. The initial perception will spark pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings. That is a universal phenomenon, occurring in the minds of others just as it does in our own, and we should see that clearly. By following these feelings various reactions may arise. We may feel greed, lust, or jealousy. We may feel fear, worry, restlessness, or boredom. These reactions are also universal. We should simply note them and then generalize. We should realize that these reactions are normal human responses, and can arise in anybody.

The practice of this style of comparison may feel forced and artificial at first, but it is no less natural than what we ordinarily do. It is merely unfamiliar. With practice, this habit pattern replaces our normal habit of egoistic comparison and feels far more natural in the long run. We become very understanding people as a result. We no longer get upset by the "failings" of others. We progress toward harmony with all life.

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CHAPTER 5

The Practice

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE many subjects of meditation, we strongly recommend that you start with focusing your undivided attention on your breathing to gain some degree of basic concentration. Remember that in doing this, you are not practicing a deep absorption or pure concentration technique. You are practicing mindfulness, for which you need only a certain amount of basic concentration. You want to cultivate mindfulness culminating in the insight and wisdom to realize the truth as it is. You want to know the workings of your body-mind complex exactly as they are. You want to get rid of all psychological annoyances to make your life truly peaceful and happy.

The mind cannot be purified without seeing things as they really are. "Seeing things as they really are" is such a heavily loaded and ambiguous phrase. Many beginning meditators wonder what we mean, since it seems like anyone who has clear eyesight should be able to see objects as they are.

When we use this phrase in reference to insight gained from meditation, however, we do not mean seeing things superficially, with our regular eyes, but seeing things as they are in themselves, with wisdom. Seeing with wisdom means seeing things within the framework of our body-mind complex without prejudices or biases that spring from greed, hatred, and delusion. Ordinarily, when we watch the working

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of our body-mind complex, we tend to ignore things that are not pleasant to us and hold onto the things that are. This is because our minds are generally influenced by desire, resentment, and delusion. Our ego, self, or opinions get in our way and color our judgment.

When we mindfully watch our bodily sensations, we should not confuse them with mental formations, for bodily sensations can arise completely independent of the mind. For instance, we sit comfortably. After a while, there can arise some uncomfortable feeling in our back or our legs. Our mind immediately experiences that discomfort and forms numerous thoughts around the feeling. At that point, without confusing the feeling with the mental formations, we should isolate the feeling as feeling and watch it mindfully. Feeling is one of the seven universal mental factors. The other six are contact, perception, attention, concentration, life force, and volition.

Other times, a certain emotion, such as resentment, fear, or lust, may arise. During these times we should watch the emotion exactly as it is, without confusing it with anything else. When we bundle our aggregates of form, feeling, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness into one and regard all of them as a feeling, we get confused because the source of the feeling becomes obscured. If we simply dwell upon the feeling without separating it from other mental factors, our realization of truth becomes very difficult.

We want to gain insight into the experience of impermanence to overcome our unhappiness and ignorance: our deeper knowledge of unhappiness overcomes the greed that causes our unhappiness, and our realization of selflessness overcomes the ignorance that arises from the notion of self. Toward these insights, we begin by seeing the mind and body as separate; and having comprehended them separately, we should also see their essential interconnectedness. As our insight becomes sharpened, we become more and more aware of the fact that all aggregates, mental and physical, are cooperating, and

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that none can exist without the others. We can truly understand the meaning of the famous metaphor of the blind man who has a healthy body and the disabled person who has good eyes. Both of them, alone, are limited. But when the disabled person climbs on the shoulders of the blind man, together they can travel and achieve their goals easily. The mind and body are like this. The body alone can do nothing for itself; it is like a log unable to move or do anything by itself except to become subject to impermanence, decay, and death. The mind can do nothing without the support of the body. When we mindfully watch both body and mind, we can see how many wonderful things they do together.

By sitting in one place, we may gain some degree of mindfulness. Going to a retreat and spending several days or several months watching our feelings, perceptions, countless thoughts, and various states of consciousness may make us eventually calm and peaceful. But normally we do not have that much time to spend in one place, meditating all the time. Therefore, we should find a way to apply our mindfulness to our daily life in order for us to be able to handle daily unforeseeable eventualities.

What we face every day is unpredictable. Things happen due to multiple causes and conditions, since we live in a conditional and impermanent world. Mindfulness is our emergency kit, readily available at any time. When we face a situation in which we feel indignation, if we mindfully investigate our own mind, we will discover bitter truths about ourselves: for example, that we are selfish; we are egocentric; we are attached to our ego; we hold on to our opinions; we think we are right and everybody else is wrong; we are prejudiced; we are biased; and at the bottom of all of this, we do not really love ourselves. This discovery, though bitter, is a most rewarding experience. And in the long run, this discovery delivers us from deeply rooted psychological and spiritual suffering.

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Mindfulness practice is the practice of being 100 percent honest with ourselves. When we watch our own mind and body, we notice certain things that are unpleasant to realize. Since we do not like them, we try to reject them. What are the things we do not like? We do not like to detach ourselves from loved ones or to live with unloved ones. We include not only people, places, and material things into our likes and dislikes, but opinions, ideas, beliefs, and decisions as well. We do not like what naturally happens to us. We do not like, for instance, growing old, becoming sick, becoming weak, or showing our age, for we have a great desire to preserve our appearance. We do not like it when someone points out our faults, for we take great pride in ourselves. We do not like someone to be wiser than we are, for we are deluded about ourselves. These are but a few examples of our personal experience of greed, hatred, and ignorance.

When greed, hatred, and ignorance reveal themselves in our daily lives, we use our mindfulness to track them down and comprehend their roots. The root of each of these mental states is within ourselves. If we do not, for instance, have the root of hatred, nobody can make us angry, for it is the root of our anger that reacts to somebody's actions or words or behavior. If we are mindful, we will diligently use our wisdom to look into our own mind. If we do not have hatred in us, we will not be concerned when someone points out our shortcomings. Rather, we will be thankful to the person who draws our attention to our faults. We have to be extremely wise and mindful to thank the person who exposes our faults for helping us to tread the upward path of self-improvement. We all have blind spots. The other person is our mirror in which we see our faults with wisdom. We should consider the person who shows our shortcomings as one who excavates a hidden treasure of which we were unaware, since it is by knowing the existence of our deficiencies that we can improve ourselves. Improving ourselves is the unswerving

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path to the perfection that is our goal in life. Before we try to surmount our defects, we should know what they are. Then, and only then, by overcoming these weaknesses, can we cultivate noble qualities hidden deep down in our subconscious mind.

Think of it this way: if we are sick, we must find out the cause of our sickness. Only then can we get treatment. If we pretend that we are not sick, even though we are suffering, we will never get treatment. Similarly, if we think that we don't have these faults, we will never clear our spiritual path. If we are blind to our own flaws, we need someone to point them out to us. When they point out our faults, we should be grateful to them like the Venerable Sariputta, who said: "Even if a seven-year-old novice monk points out my mistakes, I will accept them with utmost respect for him." Venerable Sariputta was a monk who was 100 percent mindful and had no faults. Since he did not have any pride, he was able to maintain this position. Although we are not arahants, we should determine to emulate his example, for our goal in life also is to attain what he attained.

Of course, the person pointing out our mistakes may not be totally free from defects himself, but he can see our faults just as we can see his, which he does not notice until we point them out to him. Both pointing out shortcomings and responding to someone pointing out our own shortcomings should be done mindfully. If someone becomes unmindful in indicating faults and uses unkind and harsh language, he might do more harm than good to himself as well as to the person whose shortcomings he points out. One who speaks with resentment cannot be mindful and is unable to express himself clearly. One who feels hurt while listening to harsh language may lose his mindfulness and not hear what the other person is really saying. We should speak mindfully and listen mindfully to be benefited by talking and listening. When we listen and talk mindfully, our minds are free from greed, selfishness, hatred, and delusion.

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Our Goal

As meditators, we all must have a goal, for if we do not, and blindly follow somebody's instructions on meditation, we will simply be groping in the dark. There must certainly be a goal for whatever we do consciously and willingly. It is not the vipassana meditator's goal to become enlightened before other people or to have more power or make more profit than others. Meditators are not in competition with each other for mindfulness.

Our goal is to reach the perfection of all the noble and wholesome qualities latent in our subconscious mind. This goal has five elements to it: purification of mind, overcoming sorrow and lamentation, overcoming pain and grief, treading the right path leading to attainment of eternal peace, and attaining happiness by following that path. Keeping this fivefold goal in mind, we can advance with hope and confidence.

Practice

Once you sit, do not change the position again until the end of the time you determined at the beginning. Suppose you change your original position because it is uncomfortable, and assume another position. What happens after a while is that the new position becomes uncomfortable. Then you want another and after a while it, too, becomes uncomfortable. So you may go on shifting, moving, changing one position to another the whole time you are on your meditation cushion, and you may not gain a deep and meaningful level of concentration. Therefore, you must make every effort not to change your original position. We will discuss how to deal with pain in chapter 10.

To avoid changing your position, determine at the beginning of

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meditation how long you are going to meditate. If you have never meditated before, sit motionlessly for not longer than twenty minutes. As you repeat your practice, you can increase your sitting time. The length of sitting depends on how much time you have for sitting meditation practice and how long you can sit without excruciating pain.

We should not have a time schedule to attain the goal, for our attainment depends on how we progress in our practice based on our understanding and development of our spiritual faculties. We must work diligently and mindfully toward the goal without setting any particular time schedule to reach it. When we are ready, we get there. All we have to do is to prepare ourselves for that attainment.

After sitting motionlessly, close your eyes. Our mind is analogous to a cup of muddy water. The longer you keep a cup of muddy water still, the more the mud settles down and the water will be seen clearly. Similarly, if you keep quiet without moving your body, focusing your entire undivided attention on the subject of your meditation, your mind settles down and begins to experience the bliss of meditation.

To prepare for this attainment, we should keep our mind in the present moment. The present moment is changing so fast that a casual observer does not seem to notice its existence at all. Every moment is a moment of events and no moment passes by without an event. We cannot notice a moment without noticing events taking place in that moment. Therefore, the moment we try to pay bare attention to is the present moment. Our mind goes through a series of events like a series of pictures passing through a projector. Some of these pictures are coming from our past experiences and others are our imaginations of things that we plan to do in the future.

The mind can never be focused without a mental object. Therefore we must give our mind an object that is readily available every

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present moment. One such object is our breath. The mind does not have to make a great effort to find the breath. Every moment the breath is flowing in and out through our nostrils. As our practice of insight meditation is taking place every waking moment, our mind finds it very easy to focus itself on the breath, for it is more conspicuous and constant than any other object.

After sitting in the manner described and having shared your loving friendliness with everybody, take three deep breaths. After taking three deep breaths, breathe normally, letting your breath flow in and out freely, effortlessly, and begin focusing your attention on the rims of your nostrils. Simply notice the feeling of breath going in and out. When one inhalation is complete and before exhaling begins, there is a brief pause. Notice it and notice the beginning of exhaling. When the exhalation is complete, there is another brief pause before inhaling begins. Notice this brief pause, too. This means that there are two brief pauses of breath—one at the end of inhaling and the other at the end of exhaling. These two pauses occur in such a brief moment you may not be aware of their occurrence. But when you are mindful, you can notice them.

Do not verbalize or conceptualize anything. Simply notice the incoming and outgoing breath without saying, "I breathe in," or "I breathe out." When you focus your attention on the breath, ignore any thought, memory, sound, smell, taste, etc., and focus your attention exclusively on the breath, nothing else.

At the beginning, both the inhalations and exhalations are short because the body and mind are not calm and relaxed. Notice the feeling of that short inhaling and short exhaling as they occur without saying, "short inhaling," or "short exhaling." As you continue to notice the feeling of short inhaling and short exhaling, your body and mind become relatively calm. Then your breath becomes long. Notice the feeling of that long breath as it is without saying, "Long

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breath." Then notice the entire breathing process from the beginning to the end. Subsequently the breath becomes subtle, and the mind and body become calmer than before. Notice this calm and peaceful feeling of your breathing.

What to Do When the Mind Wanders Away

In spite of your concerted effort to keep the mind on your breathing, the mind will likely wander away. It may go to past experiences, and suddenly you may find yourself remembering places you've visited, people you met, friends not seen for a long time, a book you read long ago, the taste of food you ate yesterday, and so on. As soon as you notice that your mind is no longer on your breath, mindfully bring it back and anchor it there. However, in a few moments you may be caught up again thinking how to pay your bills, to make a telephone call to your friend, write a letter to someone, do your laundry, buy your groceries, go to a party, plan your next vacation, and so forth. As soon as you notice that your mind is not on your object, bring it back mindfully. Following are some suggestions to help you gain the concentration necessary for the practice of mindfulness.

1. Counting

In a situation like this, counting may help. The purpose of counting is simply to focus the mind on the breath. Once your mind is focused on the breath, give up counting. This is a device for gaining concentration. There are numerous ways of counting. Any counting should be done mentally. Do not make any sound when you count. Following are some of the ways of counting.

a) While breathing in, count "one, one, one, one…" until the lungs are full of fresh air. While breathing out count "two, two, two, two…" until the lungs are empty of fresh air. Then while breathing in again

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count “three, three, three, three, three…” until the lungs are full again and while breathing out count again “four, four, four, four…” until the lungs are empty of fresh air. Count up to ten and repeat as many times as necessary to keep the mind focused on the breath.

b) The second method of counting is counting rapidly up to ten. While counting “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten,” breathe in, and again while counting “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten,” breathe out. This means that with one inhalation you should count up to ten and with one exhalation you should count up to ten. Repeat this way of counting as many times as necessary to focus the mind on the breath.

c) The third method of counting is to count in succession up to ten. At this time, count “one, two, three, four, five” (only up to five) while inhaling and then count “one, two, three, four, five, six” (up to six) while exhaling. Again, count “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven” (only up to seven) while inhaling. Then count “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight” while exhaling. Count up to nine while inhaling and count up to ten while exhaling. Repeat this way of counting as many times as necessary to focus the mind on the breath.

d) The fourth method is to take a long breath. When the lungs are full, mentally count “one” and breathe out completely until the lungs are empty of fresh air. Then count mentally “two.” Take a long breath again and count “three” and breathe out completely as before. When the lungs are empty of fresh air, count mentally “four.” Count your breath in this manner up to ten. Then count backward from ten to one. Count again from one to ten and then ten to one.

e) The fifth method is to join inhaling and exhaling. When the lungs are empty of fresh air, count mentally “one.” This time you should count both inhalation and exhalation as one. Again inhale, exhale, and mentally count “two.” This way of counting should be

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done only up to five and repeated from five to one. Repeat this method until your breathing becomes refined and quiet.

Remember that you are not supposed to continue your counting all the time. As soon as your mind is locked at the nostril tip where the inhalation and exhalation touch and you begin to feel that your breathing is so refined and quiet that you cannot notice inhalation and exhalation separately, you should give up counting. Counting is used only to train the mind to concentrate on one object.

2. *Connecting*

After inhaling do not wait to notice the brief pause before exhaling but connect the inhaling with exhaling, so you can notice both inhaling and exhaling as one continuous breath.

3. *Fixing*

After joining inhaling with exhaling, fix your mind on the point where you feel your inhaling and exhaling breath touching. Inhale and exhale as one single breath moving in and out touching or rubbing the rims of your nostrils.

4. *Focus your mind like a carpenter*

A carpenter draws a straight line on a board that he wants to cut. Then he cuts the board with his saw along the straight line he drew. He does not look at the teeth of his saw as they move in and out of the board. Rather he focuses his entire attention on the line he drew so he can cut the board straight. Similarly, keep your mind straight on the point where you feel the breath at the rims of your nostrils.

5. *Make your mind like a gatekeeper*

A gatekeeper does not take into account any detail of the people entering a house. All he does is notice people entering the house

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and leaving the house through the gate. Similarly, when you concentrate you should not take into account any detail of your experiences. Simply notice the feeling of your inhaling and exhaling breath as it goes in and out right at the rims of your nostrils.

As you continue your practice, your mind and body become so light that you may feel as if you are floating in the air or on water. You may even feel that your body is springing up into the sky. When the grossness of your in-and-out breathing has ceased, subtle in-and-out breathing arises. This very subtle breath is your mind's object of focus. This is the sign of concentration. This first appearance of a sign-object will be replaced by a more and more subtle sign-object. This subtlety of the sign can be compared to the sound of a bell. When a bell is struck with a big iron rod, you hear a gross sound at first. As the sound fades away, the sound becomes very subtle. Similarly, the in-and-out breath appears at first as a gross sign. As you keep paying bare attention to it, this sign becomes very subtle. But the consciousness remains totally focused on the rims of the nostrils. Other meditation objects become clearer and clearer, as the sign develops. But the breath becomes subtler and subtler as the sign develops. Because of this subtlety, you may not notice the presence of your breath. Don't get disappointed thinking that you lost your breath or that nothing is happening to your meditation practice. Don't worry. Be mindful and determined to bring your feeling of breath back to the rims of your nostrils. This is the time you should practice more vigorously, balancing your energy, faith, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

Farmer Simile

Suppose there is a farmer who uses buffaloes for plowing his rice field. As he is tired in the middle of the day, he unfastens his buffaloes and

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takes a rest under the cool shade of a tree. When he wakes up, he does not find his animals. He does not worry, but simply walks to the water place where all the animals gather for drinking in the hot midday and he finds his buffaloes there. Without any problem he brings them back and ties them to the yoke again and starts plowing his field.

Similarly, as you continue this exercise, your breath becomes so subtle and refined that you might not be able to notice the feeling of breath at all. When this happens do not worry. It has not disappeared. It is still where it was before—right at the nostril tips. Take a few quick breaths and you will notice the feeling of breathing again. Continue to pay bare attention to the feeling of the touch of breath at the rims of your nostrils.

As you keep your mind focused on the rims of your nostrils, you will be able to notice the sign of the development of meditation. You will feel the pleasant sensation of a sign. Different meditators experience this differently. It will be like a star, or a round gem, or a round pearl, or a cotton seed, or a peg made of heartwood, or a long string, or a wreath of flowers, or a puff of smoke, or a cobweb, or a film of cloud, or a lotus flower, or the disc of the moon, or the disc of the sun.

Earlier in your practice you had inhaling and exhaling as objects of meditation. Now you have the sign as the third object of meditation. When you focus your mind on this third object, your mind reaches a stage of concentration sufficient for your practice of insight meditation. This sign is strongly present at the rims of the nostrils. Master it and gain full control of it so that whenever you want, it should be available. Unite the mind with this sign that is available in the present moment and let the mind flow with every succeeding moment. As you pay bare attention to it, you will see that the sign itself is changing every moment. Keep your mind with the changing moments. Also, notice that your mind can be concentrated only on

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the present moment. This unity of the mind with the present moment is called momentary concentration. As moments are incessantly passing away one after another, the mind keeps pace with them, changing with them, appearing and disappearing with them without clinging to any of them. If we try to stop the mind at one moment, we end up in frustration because the mind cannot be held fast. It must keep up with what is happening in the new moment. As the present moment can be found any moment, every waking moment can be made a concentrated moment.

To unite the mind with the present moment, we must find something happening in that moment. However, you cannot focus your mind on every changing moment without a certain degree of concentration to keep pace with the moment. Once you gain this degree of concentration, you can use it for focusing your attention on anything you experience—the rising and falling of your abdomen, the rising and falling of the chest area, the rising and falling of any feeling, or the rising and falling of your breath or thoughts and so on.

To make any progress in insight meditation you need this kind of momentary concentration. That is all you need for the insight meditation practice because everything in your experience lives only for one moment. When you focus this concentrated state of mind on the changes taking place in your mind and body, you will notice that your breath is the physical part and the feeling of breath, consciousness of the feeling, and the consciousness of the sign are the mental parts. As you notice them you can notice that they are changing all the time. You may have various types of sensations, other than the feeling of breathing, taking place in your body. Watch them all over your body. Don't try to create any feeling that is not naturally present in any part of your body. But notice whatever sensation arises in the body. When thought arises notice it, too. All you should notice in all

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these occurrences is the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and selfless nature of all your experiences whether mental or physical.

As your mindfulness develops, your resentment for the change, your dislike for the unpleasant experiences, your greed for the pleasant experiences, and the notion of selfhood will be replaced by the deeper awareness of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness. This knowledge of reality in your experience helps you to foster a more calm, peaceful, and mature attitude toward your life. You will see what you thought in the past to be permanent is changing with such inconceivable rapidity that even your mind cannot keep up with these changes. Somehow you will be able to notice many of the changes. You will see the subtlety of impermanence and the subtlety of selflessness. This insight will show you the way to peace and happiness, and will give you the wisdom to handle your daily problems in life.

When the mind is united with the breath flowing all the time, we will naturally be able to focus the mind on the present moment. We can notice the feeling arising from contact of breath with the rim of our nostrils. As the earth element of the air that we breathe in and out touches the earth element of our nostrils, the mind feels the flow of air in and out. The warm feeling arises at the nostrils or any other part of the body from the contact of the heat element generated by the breathing process. The feeling of impermanence of breath arises when the earth element of flowing breath touches the nostrils. Although the water element is present in the breath, the mind cannot feel it.

Also, we feel the expansion and contraction of our lungs, abdomen, and lower abdomen, as the fresh air is pumped in and out of the lungs. The expansion and contraction of the abdomen, lower abdomen, and chest are parts of the universal rhythm. Everything in the universe has the same rhythm of expansion and contraction just

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like our breath and body. All of them are rising and falling. However, our primary concern is the rising and falling phenomena of the breath and minute parts of our minds and bodies.

Along with the inhaling breath, we experience a small degree of calmness. This little degree of calmness turns into tension if we don't breathe out in a few moments. As we breathe out this tension is released. After breathing out, we experience discomfort if we wait too long before having fresh air brought in again. This means that every time our lungs are full we must breathe out and every time our lungs are empty we must breathe in. As we breathe in, we experience a small degree of calmness, and as we breathe out, we experience a small degree of calmness. We desire calmness and relief of tension and do not like the tension and feeling resulting from the lack of breath. We wish that the calmness would stay longer and the tension disappear more quickly than it normally does. But the tension will not go away as fast as we wish nor will the calmness stay as long as we wish. And again we get agitated or irritated, for we desire the calmness to return and stay longer and the tension to go away quickly and not to return again. Here we see how even a small degree of desire for permanence in an impermanent situation causes pain or unhappiness. Since there is no self-entity to control this situation, we will become more disappointed.

However, if we watch our breathing without desiring calmness and without resenting the tension arising from breathing in and out, and experience only the impermanence, the unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness of our breath, our mind becomes peaceful and calm.

The mind does not stay all the time with the feeling of breath. It goes to sounds, memories, emotions, perceptions, consciousness, and mental formations as well. When we experience these states, we should forget about the feeling of breath and immediately focus our attention on these states—one at a time, not all of them at one

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time. As they fade away, we let our mind return to the breath, which is the home base the mind can return to from quick or long journeys to various states of mind and body. We must remember that all these mental journeys are made within the mind itself.

Every time the mind returns to the breath, it comes back with a deeper insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness. The mind becomes more insightful from the impartial and unbiased watching of these occurrences. The mind gains insight into the fact that this body, these feelings, the various states of consciousness and numerous mental formations are to be used only for the purpose of gaining deeper insight into the reality of this body-mind complex.

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CHAPTER 6

What to Do with Your Body

The practice of meditation has been going on for several thousand years. That is quite a bit of time for experimentation, and the procedure has been very, very thoroughly refined. Buddhist practice has always recognized that the mind and body are tightly linked and that each influences the other. Thus, there are certain recommended physical practices that will greatly help you to master this skill. And these practices should be followed. Keep in mind, however, that these postures are practice aids. Don't confuse the two. Meditation does not mean sitting in the lotus position. It is a mental skill. It can be practiced anywhere you wish. But these postures will help you to learn this skill, and they speed your progress and development. So use them.

General Rules

The purpose of the various postures is threefold. First, they provide a stable feeling in the body. This allows you to remove your attention from such issues as balance and muscular fatigue, so that you can center your concentration on the formal object of meditation. Second, they promote physical immobility, which is then reflected by an immobility of mind. This creates a deeply settled and tranquil concentration. Third, they give you the ability to sit for a long period

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of time without yielding to the meditator's three main enemies—pain, muscular tension, and falling asleep.

The most essential thing is to sit with your back straight. The spine should be erect with the spinal vertebrae held like a stack of coins, one on top of the other. Your head should be held in line with the rest of the spine. All of this is done in a relaxed manner. No stiffness. You are not a wooden soldier, and there is no drill sergeant. There should be no muscular tension involved in keeping the back straight. Sit light and easy. The spine should be like a firm young tree growing out of soft ground. The rest of the body just hangs from it in a loose, relaxed manner. This is going to require a bit of experimentation on your part. We generally sit in tight, guarded postures when we are walking or talking and in sprawling postures when we are relaxing. Neither of those will do. But they are cultural habits and they can be relearned.

Your objective is to achieve a posture in which you can sit for the entire session without moving at all. In the beginning, you will probably feel a bit odd to sit with a straight back. But you will get used to it. It takes practice, and an erect posture is very important. This is what is known in physiology as a position of arousal, and with it goes mental alertness. If you slouch, you are inviting drowsiness. What you sit on is equally important. You are going to need a chair or a cushion, depending on the posture you choose, and the firmness of the seat must be chosen with some care. Too soft a seat can put you right to sleep. Too hard can induce pain.

Clothing

The clothes you wear for meditation should be loose and soft. If they restrict blood flow or put pressure on nerves, the result will be pain and/or that tingling numbness that we normally refer to as our "legs going to sleep." If you are wearing a belt, loosen it. Don't wear tight

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pants or pants made of thick material. Long skirts are a good choice for women. Loose pants made of thin or elastic material are fine for anybody. Soft, flowing robes are the traditional garb in Asia, and they come in an enormous variety of styles such as sarongs and kimonos. Take your shoes off, and if your stockings are tight and binding, take them off, too.

Traditional Postures

When you are sitting on the floor in the traditional Asian manner, you need a cushion to elevate your spine. Choose one that is relatively firm and at least three inches thick when compressed. Sit close to the front edge of the cushion and let your crossed legs rest on the floor in front of you. If the floor is carpeted, that may be enough to protect your shins and ankles from pressure. If it is not, you will probably need some sort of padding for your legs. A folded blanket will do nicely. Don't sit all the way back on the cushion. This position causes its front edge to press into the underside of your thigh, causing nerves to pinch. The result will be leg pain.

There are a number of ways you can fold your legs. We will list four in ascending order of preference.

a) *Native American style.* Your right foot is tucked under the left knee and left foot is tucked under your right knee.

b) *Burmese style.* Both of your legs lie flat on the floor from knee to foot. They are parallel with one in front of the other.

c) *Half lotus.* Both of your knees touch the floor. One leg and foot lie flat along the calf of the other leg.

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d) Full lotus. Both knees touch the floor, and your legs are crossed at the calf. Your left foot rests on the right thigh, and your right foot rests on the left thigh. Both soles turn upward.

In all these postures, your hands are cupped one on the other, and they rest on your lap with the palms turned upward. The hands lie just below the navel with the bend of each wrist pressed against the thigh. This arm position provides firm bracing for the upper body. Don't tighten your neck or shoulder muscles. Relax your arms. Your diaphragm is held relaxed, expanded to maximum fullness. Don't let tension build up in the stomach area. Your chin is up. Your eyes can be open or closed. If you keep them open, fix them on the tip of your nose or in a middle distance straight in front. You are not looking at anything. You are just putting your eyes where there is nothing in particular to see, so that you can forget about vision. Don't strain, don't stiffen, and don't be rigid. Relax; let the body be natural and supple. Let it hang from the erect spine like a rag doll.

Half and full lotus positions are the traditional meditation postures in Asia. And the full lotus is considered the best. It is the most solid by far. Once you are locked into this position, you can be completely immovable for a very long period. Since it requires a considerable flexibility in the legs, not everybody can do it. Besides, the main criterion by which you choose a posture for yourself is not what others say about it. It is your own comfort. Choose a position that allows you to sit the longest without pain, without moving. Experiment with different postures. The tendons will loosen with practice. And then you can work gradually toward the full lotus.

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Using a Chair

Sitting on the floor may not be feasible for you because of pain or some other reason. No problem. You can always use a chair instead. Pick one that has a level seat, a straight back, and no arms. It is best to sit in such a way that your back does not lean against the back of the chair. The furniture of the seat should not dig into the underside of your thighs. Place your legs side by side, feet flat on the floor. As with the traditional postures, place both hands on your lap, cupped one upon the other. Don't tighten your neck or shoulder muscles, and relax your arms. Your eyes can be open or closed.

In all the above postures, remember your objectives. You want to achieve a state of complete physical stillness, yet you don't want to fall asleep. Recall the analogy of the muddy water. You want to promote a totally settled state of the body, which will engender a corresponding mental settling. There must also be a state of physical alertness, which can induce the kind of mental clarity you seek. So experiment. Your body is a tool for creating desired mental states. Use it judiciously.

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CHAPTER 7

What to Do with Your Mind

THE MEDITATION we teach is called insight meditation. As we have already said, the variety of possible objects of meditation is nearly unlimited, and human beings have used an enormous number down through the ages. Even within the vipassana tradition there are variations. There are meditation teachers who teach their students to follow the breath by watching the rise and fall of the abdomen. Others recommend focusing attention on the touch of the body against the cushion, or hand against hand, or the feeling of one leg against the other. The method we are explaining here, however, is considered the most traditional and is probably what Gotama Buddha taught his students. The *Satipatthana Sutta,* the Buddha's original discourse on mindfulness, specifically says that one must begin by focusing the attention on the breathing and then go on to note all other physical and mental phenomena that arise.

We sit, watching the air going in and out of our noses. At first glance, this seems an exceedingly odd and useless procedure. Before going on to specific instructions, let us examine the reason behind it. The first question we might have is why use any focus of attention at all? We are, after all, trying to develop awareness. Why not just sit down and be aware of whatever happens to be present in the mind? In fact, there are meditations of that nature. They are sometimes referred to as unstructured meditation, and they are quite difficult.

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The mind is tricky. Thought is an inherently complicated procedure. By that we mean that we become trapped, wrapped up, and stuck in the thought chain. One thought leads to another, which leads to another, and another, and another, and so on. Fifteen minutes later we suddenly wake up and realize we spent that whole time stuck in a daydream or sexual fantasy or a set of worries about our bills or whatever.

There is a difference between being aware of a thought and thinking a thought. That difference is very subtle. It is primarily a matter of feeling or texture. A thought you are simply aware of with bare attention feels light in texture; there is a sense of distance between that thought and the awareness viewing it. It arises lightly like a bubble, and it passes away without necessarily giving rise to the next thought in that chain. Normal conscious thought is much heavier in texture. It is ponderous, commanding, and compulsive. It sucks you in and grabs control of consciousness. By its very nature it is obsessional, and it leads straight to the next thought in the chain, with apparently no gap between them.

Conscious thought sets up a corresponding tension in the body, such as muscular contraction or a quickening of the heartbeat. But you won't feel tension until it grows to actual pain, because normal conscious thought is also greedy. It grabs all your attention and leaves none to notice its own effect. The difference between being aware of the thought and thinking the thought is very real. But it is extremely subtle and difficult to see. Concentration is one of the tools needed to be able to see this difference.

Deep concentration has the effect of slowing down the thought process and speeding up the awareness viewing it. The result is the enhanced ability to examine the thought process. Concentration is our microscope for viewing subtle internal states. We use the focus of attention to achieve one-pointedness of mind with calm and con-

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stantly applied attention. Without a fixed reference point you get lost, overcome by the ceaseless waves of change flowing round and round within the mind.

We use breath as our focus. It serves as that vital reference point from which the mind wanders and is drawn back. Distraction cannot be seen as distraction unless there is some central focus to be distracted from. That is the frame of reference against which we can view the incessant changes and interruptions that go on all the time as a part of normal thinking.

Ancient Pali texts liken meditation to the process of taming a wild elephant. The procedure in those days was to tie a newly captured animal to a post with a good strong rope. When you do this, the elephant is not happy. He screams and tramples and pulls against the rope for days. Finally it sinks through his skull that he can't get away, and he settles down. At this point you can begin to feed him and to handle him with some measure of safety. Eventually you can dispense with the rope and post altogether and train your elephant for various tasks. Now you've got a tamed elephant that can be put to useful work. In this analogy the wild elephant is your wildly active mind, the rope is mindfulness, and the post is your object of meditation, your breathing. The tamed elephant who emerges from this process is a well-trained, concentrated mind that can then be used for the exceedingly tough job of piercing the layers of illusion that obscure reality. Meditation tames the mind.

The next question we need to address is: Why choose breathing as the primary object of meditation? Why not something a bit more interesting? Answers to this are numerous. A useful object of meditation should be one that promotes mindfulness. It should be portable, easily available, and cheap. It should also be something that will not embroil us in those states of mind from which we are trying to free ourselves, such as greed, anger, and delusion. Breathing

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satisfies all these criteria and more. Breathing is something common to every human being. We all carry it with us wherever we go. It is always there, constantly available, never ceasing from birth till death, and it costs nothing.

Breathing is a nonconceptual process, a thing that can be experienced directly without a need for thought. Furthermore, it is a very living process, an aspect of life that is in constant change. The breath moves in cycles—inhalation, exhalation, breathing in, and breathing out. Thus, it is a miniature model of life itself.

The sensation of breath is subtle, yet it is quite distinct when you learn to tune into it. It takes a bit of an effort to find it. Yet anybody can do it. You've got to work at it, but not too hard. For all these reasons, breathing makes an ideal object of meditation. Breathing is normally an involuntary process, proceeding at its own pace without a conscious will. Yet a single act of will can slow it down or speed it up. Make it long and smooth or short and choppy. The balance between involuntary breathing and forced manipulation of breath is quite delicate. And there are lessons to be learned here on the nature of will and desire. Then, too, that point at the tip of the nostril can be viewed as a sort of a window between the inner and outer worlds. It is a nexus point and energy transfer spot where stuff from the outside world moves in and becomes a part of what we call "me," and where a part of "me" flows forth to merge with the outside world. There are lessons to be learned here about self-identity and how we form it.

Breath is a phenomenon common to all living things. A true experiential understanding of the process moves you closer to other living beings. It shows you your inherent connectedness with all of life. Finally, breathing is a present-moment process. By that we mean it is always occurring in the here and now. We don't normally live in the present, of course. We spend most of our time caught up

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in memories of the past or looking ahead to the future, full of worries and plans. The breath has none of that "other-timeness." When we truly observe the breath, we are automatically placed in the present. We are pulled out of the morass of mental images and into a bare experience of the here and now. In this sense, breath is a living slice of reality. A mindful observation of such a miniature model of life itself leads to insights that are broadly applicable to the rest of our experience.

The first step in using the breath as an object of meditation is to find it. What you are looking for is the physical, tactile sensation of the air that passes in and out of the nostrils. This is usually just inside the tip of the nose. But the exact spot varies from one person to another, depending on the shape of the nose. To find your own point, take a quick deep breath and notice the point just inside the nose or on the upper lip where you have the most distinct sensation of passing air. Now exhale and notice the sensation at the same point. It is from this point that you will follow the whole passage of breath. Once you have located your own breath point with clarity, don't deviate from that spot. Use this single point in order to keep your attention fixed. Without having selected such a point, you will find yourself moving in and out of the nose, going up and down the windpipe, eternally chasing after the breath, which you can never catch because it keeps changing, moving, and flowing.

If you ever sawed wood you already know the trick. As a carpenter, you don't stand there watching the saw blade going up and down. You would get dizzy. You fix your attention on the spot where the teeth of the blade dig into the wood. It is the only way you can saw a straight line. As a meditator, you focus your attention on that single spot of sensation inside the nose. From this vantage point, you watch the entire movement of breath with clear and collected attention. Make no attempt to control the breath. This is not a breathing

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exercise of the sort done in yoga. Focus on the natural and spontaneous movement of the breath. Don't try to regulate it or emphasize it in any way. Most beginners have some trouble in this area. In order to help themselves focus on the sensation, they unconsciously accentuate their breathing. The result is a forced and unnatural effort that actually inhibits concentration rather than helping it. Don't increase the depth of your breath or its sound. This latter point is especially important in group meditation. Loud breathing can be a real annoyance to those around you. Just let the breath move naturally, as if you were asleep. Let go and allow the process to go along at its own rhythm.

This sounds easy, but it is trickier than you think. Do not be discouraged if you find your own will getting in the way. Just use that as an opportunity to observe the nature of conscious intention. Watch the delicate interrelation between the breath, the impulse to control the breath, and the impulse to cease controlling the breath. You may find it frustrating for a while, but it is highly profitable as a learning experience, and it is a passing phase. Eventually, the breathing process will move along under its own steam, and you will feel no impulse to manipulate it. At this point you will have learned a major lesson about your own compulsive need to control the universe.

Breathing, which seems so mundane and uninteresting at first glance, is actually an enormously complex and fascinating procedure. It is full of delicate variations, if you look. There is inhalation and exhalation, long breath and short breath, deep breath, shallow breath, smooth breath, and ragged breath. These categories combine with one another in subtle and intricate ways. Observe the breath closely. Really study it. You find enormous variations and a constant cycle of repeated patterns. It is like a symphony. Don't observe just the bare outline of the breath. There is more to see here than just an in-breath and an out-breath. Every breath has a beginning, middle,

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and end. Every inhalation goes through a process of birth, growth, and death, and every exhalation does the same. The depth and speed of your breathing changes according to your emotional state, the thought that flows through your mind, and the sounds you hear. Study these phenomena. You will find them fascinating.

This does not mean, however, that you should be sitting there having little conversations with yourself inside your head: "There is a short ragged breath and there is a deep long one. I wonder what's next?" No, that is not vipassana. That is thinking. You will find this sort of thing happening, especially in the beginning. This too is a passing phase. Simply note the phenomenon and return your attention toward the observation of the sensation of breath. Mental distractions will happen again. But return your attention to your breath again, and again, and again, and again, for as long as it takes until distraction no longer occurs.

When you first begin this procedure, expect to face some difficulties. Your mind will wander off constantly, darting around like a bumblebee and zooming off on wild tangents. Try not to worry. The monkey-mind phenomenon is well known. It is something that every seasoned meditator has had to deal with. They have pushed through it one way or another, and so can you. When it happens, just note the fact that you have been thinking, daydreaming, worrying, or whatever. Gently, but firmly, without getting upset or judging yourself for straying, simply return to the simple physical sensation of the breath. Then do it again the next time, and again, and again, and again.

Somewhere in this process, you will come face to face with the sudden and shocking realization that you are completely crazy. Your mind is a shrieking, gibbering madhouse on wheels barreling pell-mell down the hill, utterly out of control and helpless. No problem. You are not crazier than you were yesterday. It has always been this way, and you just never noticed. You are also no crazier than everybody

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else around you. The only real difference is that you have confronted the situation; they have not. So they still feel relatively comfortable. That does not mean that they are better off. Ignorance may be bliss, but it does not lead to liberation. So don't let this realization unsettle you. It is a milestone actually, a sign of real progress. The very fact that you have looked at the problem straight in the eye means that you are on your way up and out of it.

In the wordless observation of the breath, there are two states to be avoided: thinking and sinking. The thinking mind manifests most clearly as the monkey-mind phenomenon we have just been discussing. The sinking mind is almost the reverse. As a general term, *sinking* denotes any dimming of awareness. At its best, it is sort of a mental vacuum in which there is no thought, no observation of the breath, no awareness of anything. It is a gap, a formless mental gray area rather like a dreamless sleep. Sinking mind is a void. Avoid it.

Vipassana meditation is an active function. Concentration is a strong, energetic attention to one single item. Awareness is a bright clean alertness. *Samadhi* and *sati*—these are the two faculties we wish to cultivate. And sinking mind contains neither. At its worst, it will put you to sleep. Even at its best it will simply waste your time.

When you find you have fallen into the state of sinking mind, just note the fact and return your attention to the sensation of breathing. Observe the tactile sensation of the in-breath. Feel the touch sensation of the out-breath. Breathe in, breathe out, and watch what happens. When you have been doing that for some time—perhaps weeks or months—you will begin to sense the touch as a physical object. Simply continue the process; breathe in and breathe out. Watch what happens. As your concentration deepens you will have less and less trouble with monkey mind. Your breathing will slow down, and you will track it more and more clearly, with fewer and fewer interruptions. You begin to experience a state of great calm in

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which you enjoy complete freedom from those things we called psychic irritants. No greed, lust, envy, jealousy, or hatred. Agitation goes away. Fear flees. These are beautiful, clear, blissful states of mind. They are temporary, and they will end when the meditation ends. Yet even these brief experiences will change your life. This is not liberation, but these are stepping stones on the path that leads in that direction. Do not, however, expect instant bliss. Even these stepping stones take time, effort, and patience.

The meditation experience is not a competition. There is a definite goal. But there is no timetable. What you are doing is digging your way deeper and deeper through layers of illusion toward realization of the supreme truth of existence. The process itself is fascinating and fulfilling. It can be enjoyed for its own sake. There is no need to rush.

At the end of a well-done meditation session, you will feel a delightful freshness of mind. It is a peaceful, buoyant, and joyous energy that you can then apply to the problems of daily living. This in itself is reward enough. The purpose of meditation is not to deal with problems, however, and problem-solving ability is a fringe benefit and should be regarded as such. If you place too much emphasis on the problem-solving aspect, you will find your attention turning to those problems during the session, sidetracking concentration.

Don't think about your problems during your practice. Push them aside very gently. Take a break from all that worrying and planning. Let your meditation be a complete vacation. Trust yourself, trust your own ability to deal with these issues later, using the energy and freshness of mind that you built up during your meditation. Trust yourself this way and it will actually occur.

Don't set goals for yourself that are too high to reach. Be gentle with yourself. You are trying to follow your own breathing continuously and without a break. That sounds easy enough, so you will have a tendency at the outset to push yourself to be scrupulous and

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exacting. This is unrealistic. Take time in small units instead. At the beginning of an inhalation, make the resolve to follow the breath just for the period of that one inhalation. Even this is not so easy, but at least it can be done. Then, at the start of the exhalation, resolve to follow the breath just for that one exhalation, all the way through. You will still fail repeatedly, but keep at it.

Every time you stumble, start over. Take it one breath at a time. This is the level of the game where you can actually win. Stick with it—fresh resolve with every breath cycle, tiny units of time. Observe each breath with care and precision, taking it one split second on top of another, with fresh resolve piled one on top of the other. In this way, continuous and unbroken awareness will eventually result.

Mindfulness of breathing is a present-moment awareness. When you are doing it properly, you are aware only of what is occurring in the present. You don't look back, and you don't look forward. You forget about the last breath, and you don't anticipate the next one. When the inhalation is just beginning, you don't look ahead to the end of that inhalation. You don't skip forward to the exhalation that is to follow. You stay right there with what is actually taking place. The inhalation is beginning, and that's what you pay attention to; that and nothing else.

This meditation is a process of retraining the mind. The state you are aiming for is one in which you are totally aware of everything that is happening in your own perceptual universe, exactly the way it happens, exactly when it is happening; total, unbroken awareness in present time. This is an incredibly high goal, and not to be reached all at once. It takes practice, so we start small. We start by becoming totally aware of one small unit of time, just one single inhalation. And, when you succeed, you are on your way to a whole new experience of life.

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CHAPTER 8

Structuring Your Meditation

EVERYTHING up to this point has been theory. Now let's dive into the actual practice. Just how do we go about this thing called meditation?

First of all, you need to establish a formal practice schedule, a specific period when you will do vipassana meditation and nothing else. When you were a baby, you did not know how to walk. Somebody went to a lot of trouble to teach you that skill. They dragged you by the arms. They gave you lots of encouragement, made you put one foot in front of the other until you could do it by yourself. Those periods of instruction constituted a formal practice in the art of walking.

In meditation, we follow the same basic procedure. We set aside a certain time, specifically devoted to developing this mental skill called mindfulness. We devote these times exclusively to that activity, and we structure our environment so there will be a minimum of distraction. This is not the easiest skill in the world to learn. We have spent our entire life developing mental habits that are really quite contrary to the ideal of uninterrupted mindfulness. Extricating ourselves from those habits requires a bit of strategy. As we said earlier, our minds are like cups of muddy water. The object of meditation is to clarify this sludge so that we can see what is going on in there. The best way to do that is just let it sit. Give it enough time and it will settle down. You wind up with clear water. In meditation, we set

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aside a specific time for this clarifying process. When viewed from the outside, it looks utterly useless. We sit there apparently as productive as a stone gargoyle. Inside, however, quite a bit is happening. The mental soup settles down, and we are left with a clarity of mind that prepares us to cope with the upcoming events of our lives.

That does not mean that we have to do anything to force this settling. It is a natural process that happens by itself. The very act of sitting still and being mindful causes this settling. In fact, any effort on our part to force this settling is counterproductive. That is repression, and it does not work. Try to force things out of the mind and you merely add energy to them. You may succeed temporarily, but in the long run you will only have made them stronger. They will hide in the unconscious until you are not watching, then they will leap out and leave you helpless to fight them off.

The best way to clarify the mental fluid is to just let it settle all by itself. Don't add any energy to the situation. Just mindfully watch the mud swirl, without any involvement in the process. Then, when it settles at last, it will stay settled. We exert energy in meditation, but not force. Our only effort is gentle, patient mindfulness.

The meditation period is like a cross section of your whole day. Everything that happens to you is stored away in the mind in some form, mental or emotional. During normal activity, you get so caught up in the press of events that the basic issues with which you are dealing are seldom thoroughly handled. They become buried in the unconscious, where they seethe and foam and fester. Then you wonder where all that tension came from.

All of this material comes forth in one form or another during your meditation. You get a chance to look at it, see it for what it is, and let it go. We set up a formal meditation period in order to create a conducive environment for this release. We reestablish our mindfulness at regular intervals. We withdraw from those events that constantly

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stimulate the mind. We back out of all that activity that prods the emotions. We go off to a quiet place and we sit still, and it all comes bubbling out. Then it goes away. The net effect is like recharging a battery. Meditation recharges your mindfulness.

Where to Sit?

Find yourself a quiet place, a secluded place, a place where you will be alone. It doesn't have to be some ideal spot in the middle of a forest. That's nearly impossible for most of us, but it should be a place where you feel comfortable, and where you won't be disturbed. It should also be a place where you won't feel on display. You want all of your attention free for meditation, not wasted on worries about how you look to others. Try to pick a spot that is as quiet as possible. It doesn't have to be a soundproof room, but there are certain noises that are highly distracting, and they should be avoided. Music and talking are about the worst. The mind tends to be sucked in by these sounds in an uncontrollable manner, and there goes your concentration.

There are certain traditional aids that you can employ to set the proper mood. A darkened room with a candle is nice. Incense is nice. A little bell to start and end your sessions is nice. These are paraphernalia, though. They provide encouragement to some people, but they are by no means essential to the practice.

You will probably find it helpful to sit in the same place each time. A special spot reserved for meditation and nothing else is an aid for most people. You soon come to associate that spot with the tranquillity of deep concentration, and that association helps you to reach deep states more quickly. The main thing is to sit in a place that you feel is conducive to your own practice. That requires a bit of experimentation. Try several spots until you find one where you feel comfortable. You

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only need to find a place where you don't feel self-conscious, and where you can meditate without undue distraction.

Many people find it helpful and supportive to sit with a group of other meditators. The discipline of regular practice is essential, and most people find it easier to sit regularly if they are bolstered by a commitment to a group sitting schedule. You've given your word, and you know you are expected to keep it. Thus, the "I'm too busy" syndrome is cleverly skirted. You may be able to locate a group of practicing meditators in your own area. It doesn't matter if they practice a different form of meditation, so long as it's one of the silent forms. On the other hand, you also should try to be self-sufficient in your practice. Don't rely on the presence of a group as your sole motivation to sit. Properly done, sitting is a pleasure. Use the group as an aid, not as a crutch.

When to Sit?

The most important rule here is this: When it comes to sitting, the description of Buddhism as the Middle Way applies. Don't overdo it. Don't underdo it. This doesn't mean you just sit whenever the whim strikes you. It means you set up a practice schedule and keep to it with a gentle, patient tenacity. Setting up a schedule acts as an encouragement. If, however, you find that your schedule has ceased to be an encouragement and become a burden, then something is wrong. Meditation is not a duty or an obligation.

Meditation is a psychological activity. You will be dealing with the raw stuff of feelings and emotions. Consequently, it is an activity that is very sensitive to the attitude with which you approach each session. What you expect is what you are most likely to get. Your practice will therefore go best when you are looking forward to sitting. If you sit down expecting grinding drudgery, that is probably what will occur.

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So set up a daily pattern that you can live with. Make it reasonable. Make it fit with the rest of your life. And if it starts to feel like you're on an uphill treadmill toward liberation, then change something.

First thing in the morning is a great time to meditate. Your mind is fresh then, before you've gotten yourself buried in responsibilities. Morning meditation is a fine way to start your day. It tunes you up and gets you ready to deal with things efficiently. You cruise through the rest of the day just a bit more lightly. Be sure you are thoroughly awake, though. You won't make much progress if you are sitting there nodding off, so get enough sleep. Wash your face, or shower before you begin. You may want to do a bit of exercise beforehand to get the circulation flowing. Do whatever you need to do in order to wake up fully, then sit down to meditate. Do not, however, let yourself get hung up in the day's activities. It's just too easy to forget to sit. Make meditation the first major thing you do in the morning.

The evening is another good time for practice. Your mind is full of all the mental rubbish that you have accumulated during the day, and it is great to get rid of that burden before you sleep. Your meditation will cleanse and rejuvenate your mind. Reestablish your mindfulness, and your sleep will be real sleep.

When you first start meditation, once a day is enough. If you feel like meditating more, that's fine, but don't overdo it. There's a burnout phenomenon we often see in new meditators. They dive right into the practice fifteen hours a day for a couple of weeks, and then the real world catches up with them. They decide that this meditation business just takes too much time. Too many sacrifices are required. They haven't got time for all of this. Don't fall into that trap. Don't burn yourself out the first week. Make haste slowly. Make your effort consistent and steady. Give yourself time to incorporate the meditation practice into your life, and let your practice grow gradually and gently.

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As your interest in meditation grows, you'll find yourself making more room in your schedule for practice. It's a spontaneous phenomenon, and it happens pretty much by itself—no force necessary.

Seasoned meditators manage three or four hours of practice a day. They live ordinary lives in the day-to-day world, and they still squeeze it all in. And they enjoy it. It comes naturally.

How Long to Sit?

A similar rule applies here: sit as long as you can, but don't overdo it. Most beginners start with twenty or thirty minutes. Initially, it's difficult to sit longer than that with profit. The posture is unfamiliar to Westerners, and it takes a bit of time for the body to adjust. The mental skills are equally unfamiliar, and that adjustment takes time, too.

As you grow accustomed to the procedure, you can extend your meditation little by little. We recommend that after a year or so of steady practice you should be sitting comfortably for an hour at a time.

Here is an important point, though: vipassana meditation is not a form of asceticism. Self-mortification is not the goal. We are trying to cultivate mindfulness, not pain. Some pain is inevitable, especially in the legs. We will thoroughly cover pain, and how to handle it, in chapter 10. There are special techniques and attitudes that you will learn for dealing with discomfort. The point to be made here is this: This is not a grim endurance contest. You don't need to prove anything to anybody. So don't force yourself to sit with excruciating pain just to be able to say that you sat for an hour. That is a useless exercise in ego. And don't overdo it in the beginning. Know your limitations, and don't condemn yourself for not being able to sit forever, like a rock.

As meditation becomes more and more a part of your life, you can extend your sessions beyond an hour. As a general rule, just deter-

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mine what is a comfortable length of time for you at this point in your life. Then sit five minutes longer than that.

There is no hard and fast rule about length of time for sitting. Even if you have established a firm minimum, there may be days when it is physically impossible for you to sit that long. That doesn't mean that you should just cancel the whole idea for that day. It's crucial to sit regularly. Even ten minutes of meditation can be very beneficial.

Incidentally, you decide on the length of your session before you meditate. Don't do it while you are meditating. It's too easy to give in to restlessness that way, and restlessness is one of the main items that we want to learn to mindfully observe. So choose a realistic length of time, and then stick to it.

You can use a watch to time your session, but don't peek at it every two minutes to see how you are doing. Your concentration will be completely lost, and agitation will set in. You'll find yourself hoping to get up before the session is over. That's not meditation—that's clock watching. Don't look at the clock until you think the whole meditation period has passed. Actually, you don't need to consult the clock at all, at least not every time you meditate. In general, you should be sitting for as long as you want to sit. There is no magic length of time. It is best, however, to set yourself a minimum length of time. If you haven't predetermined a minimum, you'll find yourself prone to short sessions. You'll bolt every time something unpleasant comes up or whenever you feel restless. That's no good. These experiences are some of the most profitable a meditator can face, but only if you sit through them. You've got to learn to observe them calmly and clearly. Look at them mindfully. When you've done that enough times, they lose their hold on you. You see them for what they are: just impulses, arising and passing away, just part of the passing show. Your life smoothes out beautifully as a consequence.

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"Discipline" is a difficult word for most of us. It conjures up images of somebody standing over you with a stick, telling you that you're wrong. But self-discipline is different. It's the skill of seeing through the hollow shouting of your own impulses and piercing their secret. They have no power over you. It's all a show, a deception. Your urges scream and bluster at you; they cajole; they coax; they threaten; but they really carry no stick at all. You give in out of habit. You give in because you never really bother to look beyond the threat. It is all empty back there. There is only one way to learn this lesson, though. The words on this page won't do it. But look within and watch the stuff coming up—restlessness, anxiety, impatience, pain—just watch it come up and don't get involved. Much to your surprise, it will simply go away. It rises, it passes away. As simple as that. There is another word for self-discipline. It is patience.

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CHAPTER 9

Set-up Exercises

In Theravada Buddhist countries, it is traditional to begin each meditation session with the recitation of a certain set of formulas. An American audience is likely to take one glance at these invocations and to dismiss them as harmless rituals and nothing more. These so-called rituals, however, have been devised and refined by a set of pragmatic and dedicated men and women, and they have a thoroughly practical purpose. They are therefore worthy of deeper inspection.

The Buddha was considered contrary in his own day. He was born into an intensely ritualized society, and his ideas appeared thoroughly iconoclastic to the established hierarchy of his own era. On numerous occasions, he disavowed the use of rituals for their own sake, and he was quite adamant about it. This does not mean that ritual has no use. It means that ritual by itself, performed strictly for its own sake, will not get you out of the trap. Indeed, such performance is a part of the trap. If you believe that mere recitation of words will save you, then you only increase your own dependence on words and concepts. This moves you away from the wordless perception of reality rather than toward it. Therefore, the formulae that follow must be practiced with a clear understanding of what they are and why they work. They are not prayers, and they are not mantras. They are not magical incantations. They are psychological cleansing devices that

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require active mental participation in order to be effective. Mumbled words without intention are useless. Vipassana meditation is a delicate psychological activity, and the mindset of the practitioner is crucial to its success. The technique works best in an atmosphere of calm, benevolent confidence. And these recitations have been designed to foster those attitudes. Correctly used, they can act as a helpful tool on the path to liberation.

The Threefold Guidance

Meditation is a tough job. It is an inherently solitary activity. One person battles against enormously powerful forces, part of the very structure of the mind doing the meditating. When you really get into it, you will eventually find yourself confronted with a shocking realization. One day you will look inside and realize the full enormity of what you are actually up against. What you are struggling to pierce looks like a solid wall so tightly knit that not a single ray of light shines through. You find yourself sitting there, staring at this edifice, and you say to yourself, "That? I am supposed to get past that? But it's impossible! That is all there is. That is the whole world. That is what everything means, and that is what I use to define myself and to understand everything around me, and if I take that away the whole world will fall apart and I will die. I cannot get through that. I just can't."

It is a very scary feeling, a very lonely feeling. You feel like, "Here I am, all alone, trying to punch away something so huge it is beyond conception." To counteract this feeling, it is useful to know that you are not alone. Others have passed this way before. They have confronted that same barrier, and they have pushed their way through to the light. They have laid out the rules by which the job can be done, and they have banded together into a fellowship for mutual

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encouragement and support. The Buddha found his way through this very same wall, and after him came many others. He left clear instructions in the form of the Dhamma to guide us along the same path. And he founded the Sangha, the community of monks and nuns, to preserve that path and to keep each other on it. You are not alone, and the situation is not hopeless.

Meditation takes energy. You need courage to confront some pretty difficult mental phenomena and the determination to sit through various unpleasant mental states. Laziness just will not serve. In order to pump up your energy for the job, repeat the following statements to yourself. Feel the intention you put into them. Mean what you say.

“I am about to tread the very same path that has been walked by the Buddha and by his great and holy disciples. An indolent person cannot follow that path. May my energy prevail. May I succeed.”

UNIVERSAL LOVING FRIENDLINESS

Vipassana meditation is an exercise in mindfulness, that is, in egoless awareness. It is a procedure in which the ego will be eradicated by the penetrating gaze of mindfulness. The practitioner begins this process with the ego in full command of mind and body. Then, as mindfulness watches the ego function, it penetrates to the roots of the mechanics of ego and extinguishes ego piece by piece. There is a full-blown Catch-22 in all this, however. Mindfulness is egoless awareness. If we start with ego in full control, how do we put enough mindfulness there at the beginning to get the job started? There is always some mindfulness present in any moment. The real problem is to gather enough of it to be effective. To do this we can use a clever tactic. We can weaken those aspects of ego that do the most harm so that mindfulness will have less resistance to overcome.

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Greed and hatred are the prime manifestations of the ego process. To the extent that grasping and rejecting are present in the mind, mindfulness will have a very rough time. The results of this are easy to see. If you sit down to meditate while you are in the grip of some strong obsessive attachment, you will find that you will get nowhere. If you are all hung up in your latest scheme to make more money, you probably will spend most of your meditation period doing nothing but thinking about it. If you are in a black fury over some recent insult, that will occupy your mind just as fully. There is only so much time in one day, and your meditation minutes are precious. It is best not to waste them. The Theravada tradition has developed a useful tool that will allow you to remove these barriers from your mind at least temporarily, so that you can get on with the job of removing their roots permanently.

You can use one idea to cancel another. You can balance a negative emotion by instilling a positive one. Giving is the opposite of greed. Benevolence is the opposite of hatred. Understand clearly now: this is not an attempt to liberate yourself by autohypnosis. You cannot condition enlightenment. *Nibbana* is an unconditioned state. A liberated person will indeed be generous and benevolent, but not because she has been conditioned to be so. She will be so purely as a manifestation of her own basic nature, which is no longer inhibited by ego. So this is not conditioning. This is rather psychological medicine. If you take this medicine according to directions, it will bring temporary relief from the symptoms of the malady from which you are currently suffering. Then you can get to work in earnest on the illness itself.

You start out by banishing thoughts of self-hatred and self-condemnation. You allow good feelings and good wishes first to flow to yourself, which is relatively easy. Then you do the same for those people closest to you. Gradually, you work outward from your own circle of intimates until you can direct a flow of those same emotions

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to your enemies and to all living beings everywhere. Correctly done, this can be a powerful and transformative exercise in itself.

At the beginning of each meditation session, say the following sentences to yourself. Really feel the intention:

> *May I be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to me. May I always meet with spiritual success. May I also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May I always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.*
>
> *May my parents be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May they always meet with spiritual success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May they always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.*
>
> *May my teachers be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May they always meet with spiritual success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May they always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.*
>
> *May my relatives be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May they always meet with spiritual success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems,*

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and failures in life. May they always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.

May my friends be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May they always meet with spiritual success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problem,s and failures in life. May they always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.

May all indifferent persons be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May they always meet with spiritual success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May they always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.

May all unfriendly persons be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May they always meet with spiritual success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May they always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.

May all living beings be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them. May they always meet with spiritual success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May they always rise above them with morality, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom.

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Once you have completed these recitations, lay aside all your troubles and conflicts for the period of practice. Just drop the whole bundle. If they come back into your meditation later, just treat them as what they are, distractions.

The practice of universal loving friendliness is also recommended for bedtime and just after arising. It is said to help you sleep well and to prevent nightmares. It also makes it easier to get up in the morning. And it makes you more friendly and open toward everybody, friend or foe, human or otherwise.

The most damaging psychic irritant arising in the mind, particularly at the time when the mind is quiet, is resentment. You may experience indignation remembering some incident that caused you psychological and physical pain. This experience can cause you uneasiness, tension, agitation, and worry. You might not be able to go on sitting and experiencing this state of mind. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you should start your meditation with generating universal loving friendliness.

You may wonder how we can wish: "May my *enemies* be well, happy, and peaceful; may no difficulties come to them; may no problem come to them; may they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life."

You must remember that you practice loving friendliness for the purification of your own mind, just as you practice meditation for your own attainment of peace and liberation from pain and suffering. As you practice loving friendliness within yourself, you can behave in a most friendly manner without biases, prejudices, discrimination, or hate. Your noble behavior enables you to help others in a most practical manner to reduce their pain and suffering. It is compassionate people who can help others. Compassion is a manifesta-

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tion of loving friendliness in action, for one who does not have loving friendliness cannot help others. Noble behavior means behaving in a most friendly manner. Behavior includes your thought, speech, and actions. If this triple mode of expression of your behavior is contradictory, then something is wrong, and contradictory behavior cannot be noble behavior. In addition, from a pragmatic perspective, it is much better to cultivate the noble thought, "May all beings be happy minded" than the thought, "I hate him." Our noble thought will one day express itself in noble behavior and our spiteful thought in evil behavior.

Remember that your thoughts are transformed into speech and action in order to bring the expected result. Thought translated into action is capable of producing a tangible result. You should always speak and do things with mindfulness of loving friendliness. While speaking of loving friendliness, if you then act or speak in a diametrically opposite way, you will be reproached by the wise. As mindfulness of loving friendliness develops, your thoughts, words, and deeds should be gentle, pleasant, meaningful, truthful, and beneficial to you as well as to others. If your thoughts, words, or deeds cause harm to you, to others, or to both, then you must ask yourself whether you are really mindful of loving friendliness.

Practically speaking, if all of your enemies were well, happy, and peaceful, they would not be your enemies. If they were free from problems, pain, suffering, affliction, neurosis, psychosis, paranoia, fear, tension, anxiety, etc., they would not be your enemies. The practical approach toward your enemies is to help them overcome their problems, so you can live in peace and happiness. In fact, if you can, you should fill the minds of all your enemies with loving friendliness and make all of them realize the true meaning of peace, so you can live in peace and happiness. The more they are neurotic, psychotic, afraid, tense, and anxious, the more trouble, pain, and suffering they

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bring to the world. If you could convert a vicious and wicked person into a holy and saintly individual, you would perform a miracle. Let us cultivate adequate wisdom and loving friendliness within ourselves to convert evil minds to saintly minds.

When you hate somebody, you think, "Let him be ugly. Let him lie in pain. Let him have no prosperity. Let him not be rich. Let him not be famous. Let him have no friends. Let him, after death, reappear in an unhappy state of deprivation in a bad destination for eternity." However, what actually happens is that your own body generates such harmful chemistry that you experience pain, increased heart rate, tension, change of facial expression, loss of appetite, deprivation of sleep, and you appear very unpleasant to others. You go through the same things you wish on your enemy. Also you cannot see the truth as it is. Your mind is like boiling water. Or you are like a patient suffering from jaundice to whom any delicious food tastes bland. Similarly, you cannot appreciate somebody's appearance, achievement, success, etc. And as long as this condition exists, you cannot meditate well.

Therefore, we recommend very strongly that you practice loving friendliness before you start your serious practice of meditation. Repeat the preceding passages very mindfully and meaningfully. As you recite these passages, feel true loving friendliness within yourself first and then share it with others, for you cannot share with others what you do not have within yourself.

Remember, though, these are not magic formulas. They don't work by themselves. If you use them as such, you will simply waste time and energy. But if you truly participate in these statements and invest them with your own energy, they will serve you well. Give them a try. See for yourself.

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CHAPTER 10

Dealing with Problems

YOU ARE GOING to run into problems in your meditation. Everybody does. Problems come in all shapes and sizes, and the only thing you can be absolutely certain about is that you will have some. The main trick in dealing with obstacles is to adopt the right attitude. Difficulties are an integral part of your practice. They aren't something to be avoided; they are to be used. They provide invaluable opportunities for learning.

The reason we are all stuck in life's mud is that we ceaselessly run from our problems and after our desires. Meditation provides us with a laboratory situation in which we can examine this syndrome and devise strategies for dealing with it. The various snags and hassles that arise during meditation are grist for the mill. They are the material with which we work. There is no pleasure without some degree of pain. There is no pain without some amount of pleasure. Life is composed of joys and miseries. They go hand in hand. Meditation is no exception. You will experience good times and bad times, ecstasies and fear.

So don't be surprised when you hit some experience that feels like a brick wall. Don't think you are special. All seasoned meditators have had their own brick walls. They come up again and again. Just expect them and be ready to cope. Your ability to cope with trouble depends upon your attitude. If you can learn to regard these hassles as opportunities, as chances to develop in your practice, you'll make

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progress. Your ability to deal with some issue that arises in meditation will carry over into the rest of your life and allow you to smooth out big issues that really bother you. If you try to avoid each piece of nastiness that arises in meditation, you are reinforcing the habit that has already made life seem so unbearable at times.

It is essential to learn to confront the less pleasant aspects of existence. Our job as meditators is to learn to be patient with ourselves, to see ourselves in an unbiased way, complete with all our sorrows and inadequacies. We have to learn to be kind to ourselves. In the long run, avoiding unpleasantness is a very unkind thing to do to yourself. Paradoxically, kindness entails confronting unpleasantness when it arises.

One popular human strategy for dealing with difficulty is autosuggestion: when something nasty pops up, you convince yourself it is not there, or you convince yourself it is pleasant rather than unpleasant. The Buddha's tactic is quite the reverse. Rather than hide it or disguise it, the Buddha's teaching urges you to examine it to death. Buddhism advises you not to implant feelings that you don't really have or avoid feelings that you do have. If you are miserable you are miserable; that is the reality, that is what is happening, so confront that. Look it square in the eye without flinching. When you are having a bad time, examine that experience, observe it mindfully, study the phenomenon and learn its mechanics. The way out of a trap is to study the trap itself, learn how it is built. You do this by taking the thing apart piece by piece. The trap can't trap you if it has been taken to pieces. The result is freedom.

This point is essential, but it is one of the least understood aspects of Buddhist philosophy. Those who have studied Buddhism superficially are quick to conclude that it is pessimistic, always harping on unpleasant things like suffering, always urging us to confront the uncomfortable realities of pain, death, and illness. Buddhist thinkers

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do not regard themselves as pessimists—quite the opposite, actually. Pain exists in the universe; some measure of it is unavoidable. Learning to deal with it is not pessimism, but a very pragmatic form of optimism. How would you deal with the death of your spouse? How would you feel if you lost your mother tomorrow? Or your sister or your closest friend? Suppose you lost your job, your savings, and the use of your legs, all on the same day; could you face the prospect of spending the rest of your life in a wheelchair? How are you going to cope with the pain of terminal cancer if you contract it, and how will you deal with your own death when that approaches? You may escape most of these misfortunes, but you won't escape all of them. Most of us lose friends and relatives at some time during our lives; all of us get sick now and then; and all of us will die someday. You can suffer through things like that or you can face them openly—the choice is yours.

Pain is inevitable, suffering is not. Pain and suffering are two different animals. If any of these tragedies strike you in your present state of mind, you will suffer. The habit patterns that presently control your mind will lock you into that suffering, and there will be no escape. A bit of time spent in learning alternatives to those habit patterns is time well invested. Most human beings spend all their energies devising ways to increase their pleasure and decrease their pain. Buddhism does not advise that you cease this activity altogether. Money and security are fine. Pain should be avoided whenever possible. Nobody is telling you to give away every possession or seek out needless pain, but Buddhism does advise you to invest time and energy in learning to deal with unpleasantness, because some pain is unavoidable. When you see a truck bearing down on you, by all means jump out of the way. But spend some time in meditation, too. Learning to deal with discomfort is the only way you'll be ready to handle the truck you didn't see.

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Problems will arise in your practice. Some of them will be physical, some will be emotional, and some will be attitudinal. All of them can be confronted and each has its own specific response. All of them are opportunities to free yourself.

PROBLEM 1: PHYSICAL PAIN

Nobody likes pain, yet everybody has some at one time or another. It is one of life's most common experiences and is bound to arise in your meditation in one form or another.

Handling pain is a two-stage process. First, get rid of the pain, if possible, or at least get rid of it as much as possible. Then, if some pain lingers, use it as an object of meditation. The first step is physical handling. Maybe the pain is an illness of one sort or another, a headache, fever, bruises, or whatever. In this case, employ standard medical treatments before you sit down to meditate: take your medicine, apply your liniment, do whatever you ordinarily would do.

Then there are certain pains that are specific to the seated posture. If you never spend much time sitting cross-legged on the floor, there will be an adjustment period. Some discomfort is nearly inevitable. According to where the pain is, there are specific remedies. If the pain is in the leg or knees, check your pants. If they are tight or made of thick material, that could be the problem. Try to change it. Check your cushion, too. It should be about three inches in height when compressed. If the pain is around your waist, try loosening your belt. Loosen the waistband of your pants if that is necessary. If you experience pain in your lower back, your posture is probably at fault. Slouching will never be comfortable, so straighten up. Don't be tight or rigid, but do keep your spine erect. Pain in the neck or upper back has several sources. The first is improper hand position. Your hands should be resting comfortably in your lap. Don't pull them up to your

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waist. Relax your arms and your neck muscles. Don't let your head droop forward. Keep it up and aligned with the rest of the spine.

After you have made all these various adjustments, you may find you still have some lingering pain. If that is the case, try step two. Make the pain your object of meditation. Don't jump up and don't get excited. Just observe the pain mindfully. When the pain becomes demanding, you will find it pulling your attention off the breath. Don't fight back. Just let your attention slide easily over onto the simple sensation. Go into the pain fully. Don't block the experience. Explore the feeling. Get beyond your avoiding reaction and go into the pure sensations that lie below that.

You will discover that there are two things present. The first is the simple sensation—pain itself. Second is your resistance to that sensation. Resistance reaction is partly mental and partly physical. The physical part consists of tensing the muscles in and around the painful area. Relax those muscles. Take them one by one and relax each one very thoroughly. This step alone will probably diminish the pain significantly. Then go after the mental side of the resistance. Just as you are tensing physically, you are also tensing psychologically. You are clamping down mentally on the sensation of pain, trying to screen it off and reject it from consciousness. The rejection is a wordless "I don't like this feeling" or "go away" attitude. It is very subtle. But it is there, and you can find it if you really look. Locate it and relax that, too.

That last part is more subtle. There are really no human words to describe this action precisely. The best way to get a handle on it is by analogy. Examine what you did to those tight muscles and transfer that same action over to the mental sphere; relax the mind in the same way that you relax the body. Buddhism recognizes that body and mind are tightly linked. This is so true that many people will not see this as a two-step procedure. For them to relax the body is to

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relax the mind and vice versa. These people will experience the entire relaxation, mental and physical, as a single process. In any case, just let go completely until your awareness slows down past that barrier of resistance and relaxes into the pure flowing sensation beneath. The resistance was a barrier that you yourself erected. It was a gap, a sense of distance between self and others. It was a borderline between "me" and "the pain." Dissolve that barrier, and separation vanishes. You slow down into that sea of surging sensation, and you merge with the pain. You become the pain. You watch its ebb and flow and something surprising happens. It no longer hurts. Suffering is gone. Only the pain remains, an experience, nothing more. The "me" who was being hurt has gone. The result is freedom from pain.

This is an incremental process. In the beginning, you can expect to succeed with small pains and be defeated by big ones. Like most of our skills, it grows with practice. The more you practice, the more pain you can handle. Please understand fully: There is no masochism being advocated here. Self-mortification is not the point. This is an exercise in awareness, not in self-torture. If the pain becomes excruciating, go ahead and move, but move slowly and mindfully. Observe your movements. See how it feels to move. Watch what it does to the pain. Watch the pain diminish. Try not to move too much, though. The less you move, the easier it is to remain fully mindful. New meditators sometimes say they have trouble remaining mindful when pain is present. This difficulty stems from a misunderstanding. These students are conceiving mindfulness as something distinct from the experience of pain. It is not. Mindfulness never exists by itself. It always has some object, and one object is as good as another. Pain is a mental state. You can be mindful of pain just as you are mindful of breathing.

The rules we covered in chapter 4 apply to pain just as they apply to any other mental state. You must be careful not to reach beyond

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the sensation and not to fall short of it. Don't add anything to it, and don't miss any part of it. Don't muddy the pure experience with concepts or pictures or discursive thinking. And keep your awareness right in the present time, right with the pain, so that you won't miss its beginning or its end. Pain not viewed in the clear light of mindfulness gives rise to emotional reactions like fear, anxiety, or anger. If it is properly viewed, we have no such reaction. It will be just sensation, just simple energy. Once you have learned this technique with physical pain, you can then generalize it to the rest of your life. You can use it on any unpleasant sensation. What works on pain will work on anxiety or chronic depression as well. This technique is one of life's most useful and applicable skills. It is patience.

Problem 2: Legs Going to Sleep

It is very common for beginners to have their legs fall asleep or go numb during meditation. They are simply not accustomed to the cross-legged posture. Some people get very anxious about this. They feel they must get up and move around. A few are completely convinced that they will get gangrene from lack of circulation. Numbness in the leg is nothing to worry about. It is caused by nerve pinch, not by lack of circulation. You can't damage the tissues of your legs by sitting. So relax. When your legs fall asleep in meditation, just mindfully observe the phenomenon. Examine what it feels like. It may be sort of uncomfortable, but it is not painful unless you tense up. Just stay calm and watch it. It does not matter if your legs go numb and stay that way for the whole period. After you have meditated for some time, that numbness will gradually disappear. Your body simply adjusts to daily practice. Then you can sit for very long sessions with no numbness whatsoever.

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PROBLEM 3: ODD SENSATIONS

People experience all manner of varied phenomena in meditation. Some people get itches. Others feel tingling, deep relaxation, a feeling of lightness, or a floating sensation. You may feel yourself growing or shrinking or rising up in the air. Beginners often get quite excited over such sensations. Don't worry, you are not likely to levitate any time soon. As relaxation sets in, the nervous system simply begins to pass sensory signals more efficiently. Large amounts of previously blocked sensory data can pour through, giving rise to all kinds of unique sensations. It does not signify anything in particular. It is just sensation. So simply employ the normal technique. Watch it come up and watch it pass away. Don't get involved.

PROBLEM 4: DROWSINESS

It is quite common to experience drowsiness during meditation. You become very calm and relaxed. That is exactly what is supposed to happen. Unfortunately, we ordinarily experience this lovely state only when we are falling asleep, and we associate it with that process. So naturally, you begin to drift off. When you find this happening, apply your mindfulness to the state of drowsiness itself. Drowsiness has certain definite characteristics. It does certain things to your thought process. Find out what. It has certain bodily feelings associated with it. Locate those.

This inquisitive awareness is the direct opposite of drowsiness, and will evaporate it. If it does not, then you should suspect a physical cause of your sleepiness. Search that out and handle it. If you have just eaten a large meal, that could be the cause. It is best to eat lightly if you are about to meditate. Or wait an hour after a big meal. And don't overlook the obvious either. If you have been out hauling

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bricks all day, you are naturally going to be tired. The same is true if you only got a few hours of sleep the night before. Take care of your body's physical needs. Then meditate. Do not give in to sleepiness. Stay awake and mindful, for sleep and meditative concentration are diametrically opposed experiences. You will not gain any new insight from sleep but only from meditation. If you are very sleepy, then take a deep breath and hold it as long as you can. Then breathe out slowly. Take another deep breath again, hold it as long as you can, and breathe out slowly. Repeat this exercise until your body warms up and sleepiness fades away. Then return to your breath.

Problem 5: Inability to Concentrate

An overactive, jumping attention is something that everybody experiences from time to time. It is generally handled by the techniques presented in the chapter on distractions. You should also be informed, however, that there are certain external factors that contribute to this phenomenon. And these are best handled by simple adjustments in your schedule. Mental images are powerful entities. They can remain in the mind for long periods. All of the storytelling arts are direct manipulation of such material, and if the writer has done his job well, the characters and images presented will have a powerful and lingering effect on the mind. If you have been to the best movie of the year, the meditation that follows is going to be full of those images. If you are halfway through the scariest horror novel you ever read, your meditation is going to be full of monsters. So switch the order of events. Do your meditation first. Then read or go to the movies.

Another influential factor is your own emotional state. If there is some real conflict in your life, that agitation will carry over into meditation. Try to resolve your immediate daily conflicts before meditation when you can. Your life will run more smoothly, and you won't be

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pondering uselessly in your practice. But don't use this advice as a way to avoid meditation. Sometimes you can't resolve every issue before you sit. Just go ahead and sit anyway. Use your meditation to let go of all the egocentric attitudes that keep you trapped within your own limited viewpoint. Your problems will resolve much more easily thereafter. And then there are those days when it seems that the mind will never rest, but you can't locate any apparent cause. Remember the cyclic alternation we spoke of earlier. Meditation goes in cycles. You have good days and you have bad days.

Vipassana meditation is primarily an exercise in awareness. Emptying the mind is not as important as being mindful of what the mind is doing. If you are frantic and you can't do a thing to stop it, just observe. It is all you. The result will be one more step forward in your journey of self-exploration. Above all, don't get frustrated over the nonstop chatter of your mind. That babble is just one more thing to be mindful of.

Problem 6: Boredom

It is difficult to imagine anything more inherently boring than sitting still for an hour with nothing to do but feel the air going in and out of your nose. You are going to run into boredom repeatedly in your meditation. Everybody does. Boredom is a mental state and should be treated as such. A few simple strategies will help you to cope.

Tactic A: Reestablish true mindfulness

If the breath seems an exceedingly dull thing to observe over and over, you may rest assured of one thing: you have ceased to observe the process with true mindfulness. Mindfulness is never boring. Look again. Don't assume that you know what breath is. Don't take it for granted that you have already seen everything there is to see.

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If you do, you are conceptualizing the process. You are not observing its living reality. When you are clearly mindful of the breath or of anything else, it is never boring. Mindfulness looks at everything with the eyes of a child, with a sense of wonder. Mindfulness sees every moment as if it were the first and the only moment in the universe. So look again.

Tactic B: Observe your mental state

Look at your state of boredom mindfully. What is boredom? Where is boredom? What does it feel like? What are its mental components? Does it have any physical feeling? What does it do to your thought process? Take a fresh look at boredom, as if you have never experienced that state before.

Problem 7: Fear

States of fear sometimes arise during meditation for no discernible reason. It is a common phenomenon, and there can be a number of causes. You may be experiencing the effect of something repressed long ago. Remember, thoughts arise first in the unconscious. The emotional contents of a thought complex often leak through into your conscious awareness long before the thought itself surfaces. If you sit through the fear, the memory itself may bubble up to a point where you can endure it. Or you may be dealing directly with the fear that we all fear: "fear of the unknown." At some point in your meditation career you will be struck with the seriousness of what you are actually doing. You are tearing down the wall of illusion you have always used to explain life to yourself and to shield yourself from the intense flame of reality. You are about to meet ultimate truth face to face. That is scary. But it has to be dealt with eventually. Go ahead and dive right in.

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A third possibility: the fear that you are feeling may be self-generated. It may be arising out of unskillful concentration. You may have set an unconscious program to "examine what comes up." Thus, when a frightening fantasy arises, concentration locks onto it, and the fantasy feeds on the energy of your attention and grows. The real problem here is that mindfulness is weak. If mindfulness was strongly developed, it would notice this switch of attention as soon as it occurred and handle the situation in the usual manner. No matter what the source of your fear, mindfulness is the cure. Observe the fear exactly as it is. Don't cling to it. Just watch it rising and growing. Study its effect. See how it makes you feel and how it affects your body. When you find yourself in the grip of horror fantasies, simply observe those mindfully. Watch the pictures as pictures. See memories as memories. Observe the emotional reactions that come along and know them for what they are. Stand aside from the process and don't get involved. Treat the whole dynamic as if you were a curious bystander. Most important, don't fight the situation. Don't try to repress the memories or the feelings or the fantasies. Just step out of the way and let the whole mess bubble up and flow past. It can't hurt you. It is just memory. It is only fantasy. It is nothing but fear.

When you let fear run its course in the arena of conscious attention, it won't sink back into the unconscious. It won't come back to haunt you later. It will be gone for good.

PROBLEM 8: AGITATION

Restlessness is often a cover-up for some deeper experience taking place in the unconscious. We humans are great at repressing things. Rather than confronting some unpleasant thought we experience, we try to bury it so we won't have to deal with the issue. Unfortunately, we usually don't succeed, at least not fully. We hide the

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thought, but the mental energy we use to cover it up sits there and boils. The result is that sense of unease that we call agitation or restlessness. There is nothing you can put your finger on. But you don't feel at ease. You can't relax. When this uncomfortable state arises in meditation, just observe it. Don't let it rule you. Don't jump up and run off. And don't struggle with it and try to make it go away. Just let it be there and watch it closely. Then the repressed material will eventually surface, and you will find out what you have been worrying about.

The unpleasant experience that you have been trying to avoid could be almost anything: guilt, greed, or other problems. It could be low-grade pain or subtle sickness or approaching illness. Whatever it is, let it arise and look at it mindfully. If you just sit still and observe your agitation, it will eventually pass. Sitting through restlessness is a little breakthrough in your meditation career. It will teach you a lot. You will find that agitation is actually rather a superficial mental state. It is inherently ephemeral. It comes and it goes. It has no real grip on you at all.

Problem 9: Trying Too Hard

Advanced meditators are generally found to be pretty jovial people. They possess one of the most valuable of all human treasures, a sense of humor. It is not the superficial witty repartee of the talk show host. It is a real sense of humor. They can laugh at their own human failures. They can chuckle at personal disasters. Beginners in meditation are often much too serious for their own good. It is important to learn to loosen up in your session, to relax in your meditation. You need to learn to watch objectively whatever happens. You can't do that if you are tensed and striving, taking it all so very, very seriously.

New meditators are often overly eager for results. They are full of

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enormous and inflated expectations. They jump right in and expect incredible results in no time flat. They push. They tense. They sweat and strain, and it is all so terribly, terribly grim and solemn. This state of tension is the antithesis of mindfulness. Naturally, they achieve little. Then they decide that this meditation is not so exciting after all. It did not give them what they wanted. They chuck it aside. It should be pointed out that you learn about meditation only by meditating. You learn what meditation is all about and where it leads only through direct experience of the thing itself. Therefore the beginner does not know where he is headed because he has developed little sense of where his practice is leading.

The novice's expectation is naturally unrealistic and uninformed. Newcomers to meditation expect all the wrong things, and those expectations do no good at all. They get in the way. Trying too hard leads to rigidity and unhappiness, to guilt and self-condemnation. When you are trying too hard, your effort becomes mechanical, and that defeats mindfulness before it even gets started. You are well advised to drop all that. Drop your expectations and straining. Simply meditate with a steady and balanced effort. Enjoy your meditation and don't load yourself down with sweat and struggles. Just be mindful. The meditation itself will take care of the future.

Problem 10: Discouragement

The upshot of pushing too hard is frustration. You are in a state of tension. You get nowhere. You realize that you are not making the progress you expected, so you get discouraged. You feel like a failure. It is all a very natural cycle, but a totally avoidable one. Striving after unrealistic expectations is the source. Nevertheless, it is a common enough syndrome and, in spite of all the best advice, you may find it happening to you. There is a solution. If you find yourself discour-

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aged, just observe your state of mind clearly. Don't add anything to it. Just watch it. A sense of failure is only another ephemeral emotional reaction. If you get involved, it feeds on your energy and it grows. If you simply stand aside and watch it, it passes away.

If you are discouraged over your perceived failure in meditation, that is especially easy to deal with. You feel you have failed in your practice. You have failed to be mindful. Simply become mindful of that sense of failure. You have just reestablished your mindfulness with that single step. The reason for your sense of failure is nothing but a memory. There is no such thing as failure in meditation. There are setbacks and difficulties. But there is no failure unless you give up entirely. Even if you have spent twenty solid years getting nowhere, you can be mindful at any second you choose. It is your decision. Regretting is only one more way of being unmindful. The instant that you realize that you have been unmindful, that realization itself is an act of mindfulness. So continue the process. Don't get sidetracked by an emotional reaction.

PROBLEM 11: RESISTANCE TO MEDITATION

There are times when you don't feel like meditating. The very idea seems obnoxious. Missing a single practice session is scarcely important, but it very easily becomes a habit. It is wiser to push on through the resistance. Go sit anyway. Observe this feeling of aversion. In most cases it is a passing emotion, a flash in the pan that will evaporate right in front of your eyes. Five minutes after you sit down it is gone. In other cases it is due to some sour mood that day, and it lasts longer. Still, it does pass. And it is better to get rid of it in twenty or thirty minutes of meditation than to carry it around with you and let it ruin the rest of your day. At other times, resistance may be due to some difficulty you are having with the practice itself. You may or

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may not know what that difficulty is. If the problem is known, handle it by one of the techniques given in this book. Once the problem is gone, resistance will be gone. If the problem is unknown, then you are going to have to tough it out. Just sit through the resistance and observe it mindfully. It will pass. Then the problem causing it will probably bubble up in its wake, and you can deal with that.

If resistance to meditation is a common feature of your practice, then you should suspect some subtle error in your basic attitude. Meditation is not a ritual conducted in a particular posture. It is not a painful exercise, or period of enforced boredom. And it is not a grim, solemn obligation. Meditation is mindfulness. It is a new way of seeing and it is a form of play. Meditation is your friend. Come to regard it as such, and resistance will disappear like smoke on a summer breeze.

If you try all these possibilities and the resistance remains, then there may be a problem. Certain metaphysical snags that meditators sometimes encounter go beyond the scope of this book. It is not common for new meditators to hit these, but it can happen. Don't give up. Go and get help. Seek out qualified teachers of the vipassana style of meditation and ask them to help you resolve the situation. Such people exist for exactly that purpose.

Problem 12: Stupor or Dullness

We have already discussed the sinking mind phenomenon. But there is a special route to that state you should watch out for. Mental dullness can result as an unwanted byproduct of deepening concentration. As your relaxation deepens, muscles loosen and nerve transmissions change. This produces a very calm and light feeling in the body. You feel very still and somewhat divorced from the body. This is a very pleasant state, and at first your concentration is quite

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good, nicely centered on the breath. As it continues, however, the pleasant feelings intensify and they distract your attention from the breath. You start to really enjoy the state and your mindfulness goes way down. Your attention winds up scattered, drifting listlessly through vague clouds of bliss. The result is a very unmindful state, sort of an ecstatic stupor. The cure, of course, is mindfulness. Mindfully observe these phenomena and they will dissipate. When blissful feelings arise accept them. There is no need to avoid them, but don't get wrapped up in them. They are physical feelings, so treat them as such. Observe feelings as feelings. Observe dullness as dullness. Watch them rise and watch them pass. Don't get involved.

You will have problems in meditation. Everybody does. You can treat them as terrible torments or as challenges to be overcome. If you regard them as burdens, your suffering will only increase. If you regard them as opportunities to learn and to grow, your spiritual prospects are unlimited.

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CHAPTER 11

Dealing with Distractions I

At some time, every meditator encounters distractions during practice, and methods are needed to deal with them. Many useful strategies have been devised to get you back on track more quickly than that of trying to push your way through by sheer force of will. Concentration and mindfulness go hand in hand. Each one complements the other. If either one is weak, the other will eventually be affected. Bad days are usually characterized by poor concentration. Your mind just keeps floating around. You need a method of reestablishing your concentration, even in the face of mental adversity. Luckily, you have it. In fact, you can choose from an array of traditional practical maneuvers.

Maneuver 1: Time Gauging

The first technique has been covered in an earlier chapter. A distraction has pulled you away from the breath, and you suddenly realize that you've been daydreaming. The trick is to pull all the way out of whatever has captured you, to break its hold on you completely so you can go back to the breath with full attention. You do this by gauging the length of time that you were distracted. This is not a precise calculation. You don't need a precise figure, just a rough estimate. You can measure it in minutes, or by significant thoughts. Just say to

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yourself, "Okay, I have been distracted for about two minutes," or "since the dog started barking," or "since I started thinking about money." When you first start practicing this technique, you will do it by talking to yourself. Once the habit is well established, you can drop that, and the action becomes wordless and very quick. The whole idea, remember, is to pull out of the distraction and get back to the breath. You pull out of the thought by making it the object of inspection just long enough to glean from it a rough approximation of its duration. The interval itself is not important. Once you are free of the distraction, drop the whole thing and go back to the breath. Do not get hung up in the estimate.

Maneuver 2: Deep Breaths

When your mind is wild and agitated, you can often reestablish mindfulness with a few quick deep breaths. Pull the air in strongly and let it out the same way. This increases the sensation inside the nostrils and makes it easier to focus. Make a strong act of will and apply some force to your attention. Concentration can be forced into growth, so you will probably find your full attention settling nicely back on the breath.

Maneuver 3: Counting

Counting the breaths as they pass is a highly traditional procedure. Some schools of practice teach this activity as their primary tactic. Vipassana uses it as an auxiliary technique for reestablishing mindfulness and for strengthening concentration. As we discussed in chapter 5, you can count breaths in a number of different ways. Remember to keep your attention on the breath. You will probably notice a change after you have done your counting. The breath slows

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down, or it becomes very light and refined. This is a physiological signal that concentration has become well established. At this point, the breath is usually so light or so fast and gentle that you can't clearly distinguish the inhalation from the exhalation. They seem to blend into each other. You can then count both of them as a single cycle. Continue your counting process, but only up to a count of five, covering the same five-breath sequence, then start over. When counting becomes a bother, go on to the next step. Drop the numbers and forget about the concepts of inhalation and exhalation. Just dive right in to the pure sensation of breathing. Inhalation blends into exhalation. One breath blends into the next in a never-ending cycle of pure, smooth flow.

Maneuver 4: The In-Out Method

This is an alternative to counting, and it functions in much the same manner. Just direct your attention to the breath and mentally tag each cycle with the words, "Inhalation…exhalation," or "In…out." Continue the process until you no longer need these concepts, and then throw them away.

Maneuver 5: Canceling One Thought with Another

Some thoughts just won't go away. We humans are obsessional beings. It's one of our biggest problems. We tend to lock onto things like sexual fantasies and worries and ambitions. We feed those thought complexes over years of time and give them plenty of exercise by playing with them in every spare moment. Then when we sit down to meditate, we order them to go away and leave us alone. It is scarcely surprising that they don't obey. Persistent thoughts like these require a direct approach, a full-scale frontal attack.

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Buddhist psychology has developed a distinct system of classification. Rather than dividing thoughts into classes like "good" and "bad," Buddhist thinkers prefer to regard them as "skillful" versus "unskillful." An unskillful thought is one connected with greed, hatred, or delusion. These are the thoughts that the mind most easily builds into obsessions. They are unskillful in the sense that they lead you away from the goal of liberation. Skillful thoughts, on the other hand, are those connected with generosity, compassion, and wisdom. They are skillful in the sense that they may be used as specific remedies for unskillful thoughts, and thus can assist you in moving toward liberation.

You cannot condition liberation. It is not a state built out of thoughts. Nor can you condition the personal qualities that liberation produces. Thoughts of benevolence can produce a semblance of benevolence, but it's not the real item. It will break down under pressure. Thoughts of compassion produce only superficial compassion. Therefore, these skillful thoughts will not, in themselves, free you from the trap. They are skillful only if applied as antidotes to the poison of unskillful thoughts. Thoughts of generosity can temporarily cancel greed. They kick it under the rug long enough for mindfulness to do its work unhindered. Then, when mindfulness has penetrated to the roots of the ego process, greed evaporates and true generosity arises.

This principle can be used on a day-to-day basis in your own meditation. If a particular sort of obsession is troubling you, you can cancel it out by generating its opposite. Here is an example: If you absolutely hate Charlie, and his scowling face keeps popping into your mind, try directing a stream of love and friendliness toward Charlie, or try contemplating his good qualities. You probably will get rid of the immediate mental image. Then you can get on with the job of meditation.

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Sometimes this tactic alone doesn't work. The obsession is simply too strong. In this case you've got to weaken its hold on you somewhat before you can successfully balance it out. Here is where guilt, one of man's most misbegotten emotions, finally serves a purpose. Take a good strong look at the emotional response you are trying to get rid of. Actually ponder it. See how it makes you feel. Look at what it is doing to your life, your happiness, your health, and your relationships. Try to see how it makes you appear to others. Look at the way it is hindering your progress toward liberation. The Pali scriptures urge you to do this very thoroughly indeed. They advise you to work up the same sense of disgust and humiliation that you would feel if you were forced to walk around with the carcass of a dead and decaying animal tied around your neck. Real loathing is what you are after. This step may end the problem all by itself. If it doesn't, then balance out the lingering remainder of the obsession by once again generating its opposite emotion.

Thoughts of greed cover everything connected with desire, from outright avarice for material gain, all the way to a subtle need to be respected as a moral person. Thoughts of hatred run the gamut from pettiness to murderous rage. Delusion covers everything from daydreaming to full-blown hallucinations. Generosity cancels greed. Benevolence and compassion cancel hatred. You can find a specific antidote for any troubling thought if you just think about it awhile.

MANEUVER 6: RECALLING YOUR PURPOSE

There are times when things pop into your mind, apparently at random. Words, phrases, or whole sentences jump up out of the unconscious for no discernible reason. Objects appear. Pictures flash on and off. This is an unsettling experience. Your mind feels like a flag flapping in a stiff wind. It washes back and forth like waves in

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the ocean. Often, at times like this, it is enough just to remember why you are there. You can say to yourself, "I'm not sitting here just to waste my time with these thoughts. I'm here to focus my mind on the breath, which is universal and common to all living beings." Sometimes your mind will settle down, even before you complete this recitation. Other times you may have to repeat it several times before you refocus on the breath.

These techniques can be used singly, or in combinations. Properly employed, they constitute quite an effective arsenal for your battle against the monkey mind.

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CHAPTER 12

Dealing with Distractions II

SO THERE YOU ARE, meditating beautifully. Your body is totally immobile, and your mind is totally still. You just glide right along following the flow of the breath, in, out, in, out…calm, serene, and concentrated. Everything is perfect. And then, all of a sudden, something totally different pops into your mind: "I sure wish I had an ice cream cone." That's a distraction, obviously. That's not what you are supposed to be doing. You notice that, and you drag yourself back to the breath, back to the smooth flow, in, out, in…And then: "Did I ever pay that gas bill?" Another distraction. You notice that one, and you haul yourself back to the breath. In, out, in, out, in…"That new science fiction movie is out. Maybe I can go see it Tuesday night. No, not Tuesday, got too much to do on Wednesday. Thursday's better…" Another distraction. You pull yourself out of that one, and back you go to the breath, except that you never quite get there, because before you do, that little voice in your head says, "My back is killing me." And on and on it goes, distraction after distraction, seemingly without end.

What a bother. But this is what it is all about. These distractions are actually the whole point. The key is to learn to deal with these things. Learning to notice them without being trapped in them. That's what we are here for. This mental wandering is unpleasant, to be sure. But it is your mind's normal mode of operation. Don't think of it as the

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enemy. It is just the simple reality. And if you want to change something, the first thing you have to do is to see it the way it is.

When you first sit down to concentrate on the breath, you will be struck by how incredibly busy the mind actually is. It jumps and jibbers. It veers and bucks. It chases itself around in constant circles. It chatters. It thinks. It fantasizes and daydreams. Don't be upset about that. It's natural. When your mind wanders from the subject of meditation, just observe the distraction mindfully.

When we speak of a distraction in insight meditation, we are speaking of any preoccupation that pulls the attention off the breath. This brings up a new, major rule for your meditation: When any mental state arises strongly enough to distract you from the object of meditation, switch your attention to the distraction briefly. Make the distraction a temporary object of meditation. Please note the word *temporary*. It's quite important. We are not advising that you switch horses in midstream. We do not expect you to adopt a whole new object of meditation every three seconds. The breath will always remain your primary focus. You switch your attention to the distraction only long enough to notice certain specific things about it. What is it? How strong is it? And how long does it last?

As soon as you have wordlessly answered these questions, you are through with your examination of that distraction, and you return your attention to the breath. Here again, please note the operant term, *wordlessly*. These questions are not an invitation to more mental chatter. That would be moving you in the wrong direction, toward more thinking. We want you to move away from thinking, back to a direct, wordless, and nonconceptual experience of the breath. These questions are designed to free you from the distraction and give you insight into its nature, not to get you more thoroughly stuck in it. They will tune you in to what is distracting you and help you get rid of it—all in one step.

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Here is the problem: When a distraction, or any mental state, arises in the mind, it blossoms forth first in the unconscious. Only a moment later does it rise to the conscious mind. That split-second difference is quite important, because it is time enough for grasping to occur. Grasping occurs almost instantaneously, and it takes place first in the unconscious. Thus, by the time the grasping rises to the level of conscious recognition, we have already begun to lock on to it. It is quite natural for us to simply continue that process, getting more and more tightly stuck in the distraction as we continue to view it. We are, by this time, quite definitely thinking the thought rather than just viewing it with bare attention. The whole sequence takes place in a flash. This presents us with a problem. By the time we become consciously aware of a distraction, we are already, in a sense, stuck in it.

Our three questions, “What is it? How strong is it? And, how long does it last?” are a clever remedy for this particular malady. In order to answer these questions, we must ascertain the quality of the distraction. To do that, we must divorce ourselves from it, take a mental step back from it, disengage from it, and view it objectively. We must stop thinking the thought or feeling the feeling in order to view it as an object of inspection. This very process is an exercise in *mindfulness,* uninvolved, detached awareness. The hold of the distraction is thus broken, and mindfulness is back in control. At this point, mindfulness makes a smooth transition back to its primary focus, and we return to the breath.

When you first begin to practice this technique, you will probably have to do it with words. You will ask your questions in words, and get answers in words. It won’t be long, however, before you can dispense with the formality of words altogether. Once the mental habits are in place, you simply note the distraction, note the qualities of the distraction, and return to the breath. It’s a totally nonconceptual

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process, and it's very quick. The distraction itself can be anything: a sound, a sensation, an emotion, a fantasy, anything at all. Whatever it is, don't try to repress it. Don't try to force it out of your mind. There's no need for that. Just observe it mindfully with bare attention. Examine the distraction wordlessly, and it will pass away by itself. You will find your attention drifting effortlessly back to the breath. And do not condemn yourself for having been distracted. Distractions are natural. They come and they go.

Despite this piece of sage counsel, you're going to find yourself condemning anyway. That's natural too. Just observe the process of condemnation as another distraction, and then return to the breath.

Watch the sequence of events: Breathing. Breathing. Distracting thought arising. Frustration arising over the distracting thought. You condemn yourself for being distracted. You notice the self-condemnation. You return to the breathing. Breathing. Breathing. It's really a very natural, smooth-flowing cycle, if you do it correctly. The trick, of course, is patience. If you can learn to observe these distractions without getting involved, it's all very easy. You just glide through the distraction, and your attention returns to the breath quite easily. Of course, the very same distraction may pop up a moment later. If it does, just observe that mindfully. If you are dealing with an old, established thought pattern, this can go on happening for quite a while, sometimes years. Don't get upset. This too is natural. Just observe the distraction and return to the breath. Don't fight with these distracting thoughts. Don't strain or struggle. It's a waste. Every bit of energy that you apply to that resistance goes into the thought complex and makes it all the stronger. So don't try to force such thoughts out of your mind. It's a battle you can never win. Just observe the distraction mindfully and it will eventually go away. It's very strange, but the more bare attention you pay to such disturbances, the weaker they get. Observe them long enough and often

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enough with bare attention, and they fade away forever. Fight with them and they gain strength. Watch them with detachment and they wither.

Mindfulness is a function that disarms distractions, in the same way that a munitions expert might defuse a bomb. Weak distractions are disarmed by a single glance. Shine the light of awareness on them and they evaporate instantly, never to return. Deep-seated, habitual thought patterns require constant mindfulness repeatedly applied over whatever time period it takes to break their hold. Distractions are really paper tigers. They have no power of their own. They need to be fed constantly, or else they die. If you refuse to feed them by your own fear, anger, and greed, they fade.

Mindfulness is the most important aspect of meditation. It is the primary thing that you are trying to cultivate. So there is really no need at all to struggle against distractions. The crucial thing is to be mindful of what is occurring, not to control what is occurring. Remember, concentration is a tool. It is secondary to bare attention. From the point of view of mindfulness, there is really no such thing as a distraction. Whatever arises in the mind is viewed as just one more opportunity to cultivate mindfulness. Breath, remember, is an arbitrary focus, and it is used as our primary object of attention. Distractions are used as secondary objects of attention. They are certainly as much a part of reality as breath. It actually makes rather little difference what the object of mindfulness is. You can be mindful of the breath, or you can be mindful of the distraction. You can be mindful of the fact that your mind is still, and your concentration is strong, or you can be mindful of the fact that your concentration is in ribbons and your mind is in an absolute shambles. It's all mindfulness. Just maintain that mindfulness, and concentration eventually will follow.

The purpose of meditation is not to concentrate on the breath,

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without interruption, forever. That by itself would be a useless goal. The purpose of meditation is not to achieve a perfectly still and serene mind. Although a lovely state, it doesn't lead to liberation by itself. The purpose of meditation is to achieve uninterrupted mindfulness. Mindfulness, and only mindfulness, produces enlightenment.

Distractions come in all sizes, shapes, and flavors. Buddhist philosophy has organized them into categories. One of them is the category of hindrances. They are called hindrances because they block your development of both components of meditation, mindfulness and concentration. A bit of caution on this term: The word "hindrances" carries a negative connotation, and indeed these are states of mind we want to eradicate. That does not mean, however, that they are to be repressed, avoided, or condemned.

Let's use greed as an example. We wish to avoid prolonging any state of greed that arises, because a continuation of that state leads to bondage and sorrow. That does not mean we try to toss the thought out of the mind when it appears. We simply refuse to encourage it to stay. We let it come, and we let it go. When greed is first observed with bare attention, no value judgments are made. We simply stand back and watch it arise. The whole dynamic of greed from start to finish is simply observed in this way. We don't help it, or hinder it, or interfere with it in the slightest. It stays as long as it stays. And we learn as much about it as we can while it is there. We watch what greed does. We watch how it troubles us and how it burdens others. We notice how it keeps us perpetually unsatisfied, forever in a state of unfulfilled longing. From this firsthand experience, we ascertain at a gut level that greed is an unskillful way to run your life. There is nothing theoretical about this realization.

All of the hindrances are dealt with in the same way, and we will look at them here one by one.

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Desire

Let us suppose you have been distracted by some nice experience in meditation. It could be a pleasant fantasy or a thought of pride. It might be a feeling of self-esteem. It might be a thought of love or even the physical sensation of bliss that comes with the meditation experience itself. Whatever it is, what follows is the state of desire—desire to obtain whatever you have been thinking about, or desire to prolong the experience you are having. No matter what its nature, you should handle desire in the following manner. Notice the thought or sensation as it arises. Notice the mental state of desire that accompanies it as a separate thing. Notice the exact extent or degree of that desire. Then notice how long it lasts and when it finally disappears. When you have done that, return your attention to breathing.

Aversion

Suppose that you have been distracted by some negative experience. It could be something you fear or some nagging worry. It might be guilt or depression or pain. Whatever the actual substance of the thought or sensation, you find yourself rejecting or repressing—trying to avoid it, resist it, or deny it. The handling here is essentially the same. Watch the arising of the thought or sensation. Notice the state of rejection that comes with it. Gauge the extent or degree of that rejection. See how long it lasts and when it fades away. Then return your attention to your breath.

Lethargy

Lethargy comes in various grades and intensities, ranging from slight drowsiness to utter torpor. We are talking about a mental state here, not a physical one. Sleepiness or physical fatigue is something quite different and, in the Buddhist system of classification, it would be categorized as a physical feeling. Mental lethargy is closely related to

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aversion in that it is one of the mind's clever little ways of avoiding those issues it finds unpleasant. Lethargy is a sort of turn-off of the mental apparatus, a dulling of sensory and cognitive acuity. It is an enforced stupidity pretending to be sleep.

This can be a tough one to deal with, because its presence is directly contrary to the employment of mindfulness. Lethargy is nearly the reverse of mindfulness. Nevertheless, mindfulness is the cure for this hindrance, too, and the handling is the same. Note the state of drowsiness when it arises, and note its extent or degree. Note when it arises, how long it lasts, and when it passes away. The only thing special here is the importance of catching the phenomenon early. You have got to get it right at its conception and apply liberal doses of pure awareness right away. If you let it get a start, its growth will probably outpace your mindfulness power. When lethargy wins, the result is the sinking mind, or even sleep.

Agitation

States of restlessness and worry are expressions of mental agitation. Your mind keeps darting around, refusing to settle on any one thing. You may keep running over and over the same issues. But even here, an unsettled feeling is the predominant component. The mind refuses to settle anywhere. It jumps around constantly. The cure for this condition is the same basic sequence. Restlessness imparts a certain feeling to consciousness. You might call it a flavor or texture. Whatever you call it, that unsettled feeling is there as a definable characteristic. Look for it. Once you have spotted it, note how much of it is present. Note when it arises. Watch how long it lasts, and see when it fades away. Then return your attention to the breath.

Doubt

Doubt has its own distinct feeling in consciousness. The Pali texts

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describe it very nicely. It's the feeling of a man stumbling through a desert and arriving at an unmarked crossroad. Which road should he take? There is no way to tell. So he just stands there vacillating. One of the common forms this takes in meditation is an inner dialogue something like this: "What am I doing just sitting like this? Am I really getting anything out of this at all? Oh! Sure I am. This is good for me. The book said so. No, that is crazy. This is a waste of time. No, I won't give up. I said I was going to do this, and I am going to do it. Or am I just being stubborn? I don't know. I just don't know." Don't get stuck in this trap. It is just another hindrance. Another of the mind's little smoke screens to keep you from actually becoming aware of what is happening. To handle doubt, simply become aware of this mental state of wavering as an object of inspection. Don't be trapped in it. Back out of it and look at it. See how strong it is. See when it comes and how long it lasts. Then watch it fade away, and go back to the breathing.

This is the general pattern you will use on any distraction that arises. By distraction, remember we mean any mental state that arises to impede your meditation. Some of these are quite subtle. It is useful to list some of the possibilities. The negative states are pretty easy to spot: insecurity, fear, anger, depression, irritation, and frustration.

Craving and desire are a bit more difficult to spot because they can apply to things we normally regard as virtuous or noble. You can experience the desire to perfect yourself. You can feel craving for greater virtue. You can even develop an attachment to the bliss of the meditation experience itself. It is a bit hard to detach yourself from such noble feelings. In the end, though, it is just more greed. It is a desire for gratification and a clever way of ignoring the present-moment reality.

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Trickiest of all, however, are those really positive mental states that come creeping into your meditation. Happiness, peace, inner contentment, sympathy, and compassion for all beings everywhere. These mental states are so sweet and so benevolent that you can scarcely bear to pry yourself loose from them. It makes you feel like a traitor to humanity. There is no need to feel this way. We are not advising you to reject these states of mind or to become heartless robots. We merely want you to see them for what they are. They are mental states. They come, and they go. They arise, and they pass away. As you continue your meditation, these states will arise more often. The trick is not to become attached to them. Just see each one as it comes up. See what it is, how strong it is, and how long it lasts. Then watch it drift away. It is all just more of the passing show of your own mental universe.

Just as breathing comes in stages, so do the mental states. Every breath has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Every mental state has a birth, a growth, and a decay. You should strive to see these stages clearly. This is no easy thing to do, however. As we have already noted, every thought and sensation begins first in the unconscious region of the mind and only later rises to consciousness. We generally become aware of such things only after they have arisen in the conscious realm and stayed there for some time. Indeed we usually become aware of distractions only when they have released their hold on us and are already on their way out. It is at this point that we are struck with that sudden realization that we have been somewhere, daydreaming, fantasizing, or whatever. Quite obviously this is far too late in the chain of events. We may call this phenomenon catching the lion by his tail, and it is an unskillful thing to do. Like confronting a dangerous beast, we must approach mental states head on. Patiently, we will learn to recognize them as they arise from progressively deeper levels of our conscious mind.

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Since mental states arise first in the unconscious, to catch the arising of the mental state, you've got to extend your awareness down into this unconscious area. That is difficult, because you can't see what is going on down there, at least not in the same way you see a conscious thought. But you can learn to get a vague sense of movement and to operate by a sort of mental sense of touch. This comes with practice, and the ability is another of the effects of the deep calm of concentration. Concentration slows down the arising of these mental states and gives you time to feel each one arising out of the unconscious even before you see it in consciousness. Concentration helps you to extend your awareness down into that boiling darkness where thought and sensation begin.

As your concentration deepens, you gain the ability to see thoughts and sensations arising slowly, like separate bubbles, each distinct and with spaces between them. They bubble up in slow motion out of the unconscious. They stay a while in the conscious mind, and then they drift away.

The application of awareness to mental states is a precision operation. This is particularly true of feelings or sensation. It is very easy to overreach the sensation. That is, to add something to it above and beyond what is really there. It is equally easy to fall short of sensation, to get part of it but not all. The ideal that you are striving for is to experience each mental state fully, exactly the way it is, adding nothing to it and not missing any part of it. Let us use pain in the leg as an example. What is actually there is a pure, flowing sensation. It changes constantly, never the same from one moment to the next. It moves from one location to another, and its intensity surges up and down. Pain is not a thing. It is an event. There should be no concepts tacked on to it and none associated with it. A pure unobstructed awareness of this event will experience it simply as a flowing pattern of energy and nothing more. No thought and no rejection. Just energy.

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Early on in our practice of meditation, we need to rethink our underlying assumptions regarding conceptualization. For most of us, we have earned high marks in school and in life for our ability to manipulate mental phenomena, or concepts, logically. Our careers, much of our success in everyday life, our happy relationships, we view as largely the result of our successful manipulation of concepts. In developing mindfulness, however, we temporarily suspend the conceptualization process and focus on the pure nature of mental phenomena. During meditation we are seeking to experience the mind at the preconceptual level.

But the human mind conceptualizes such occurrences as pain. You find yourself thinking of it as “the pain.” That is a concept. It is a label, something added to the sensation itself. You find yourself building a mental image, a picture of the pain, seeing it as a shape. You may see a diagram of the leg with the pain outlined in some lovely color. This is very creative and terribly entertaining but not what we want. Those are concepts tacked on to the living reality. Most likely, you will probably find yourself thinking: “I have a pain in my leg.” “I” is a concept. It is something extra added to the pure experience.

When you introduce “I” into the process, you are building a conceptual gap between the reality and the awareness viewing that reality. Thoughts such as “me,” “my,” or “mine” have no place in direct awareness. They are extraneous addenda, and insidious ones at that. When you bring “me” into the picture, you are identifying with the pain. That simply adds emphasis to it. If you leave “I” out of the operation, pain is not painful. It is just a pure surging energy flow. It can even be beautiful. If you find “I” insinuating itself in your experience of pain or indeed any other sensation, then just observe that mindfully. Pay bare attention to the phenomenon of personal identification with pain.

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The general idea, however, is almost too simple. You want to really see each sensation, whether it is pain, bliss, or boredom. You want to experience that thing fully in its natural and unadulterated form. There is only one way to do this. Your timing has to be precise. Your awareness of each sensation must coordinate exactly with the arising of that sensation. If you catch it just a bit too late, you miss the beginning. You won't get all of it. If you hang on to any sensation past the time when it has faded away, then what you are holding onto is a memory. The thing itself is gone, and by holding onto that memory, you miss the arising of the next sensation. It is a very delicate operation. You've got to cruise along right here in the present, picking things up and letting things drop with no delays whatsoever. It takes a very light touch. Your relation to sensation should never be one of past or future but always of the simple and immediate now.

The human mind seeks to conceptualize phenomena, and it has developed a host of clever ways to do so. Every simple sensation will trigger a burst of conceptual thinking if you give the mind its way. Let us take hearing, for example. You are sitting in meditation and somebody in the next room drops a dish. The sounds strike your ear. Instantly you see a picture of that other room. You probably see a person dropping a dish, too. If this is a familiar environment, say your own home, you probably will have a 3-D technicolor mind movie of who did the dropping and which dish was dropped. This whole sequence presents itself to consciousness instantly. It just jumps out of the unconscious so bright and clear and compelling that it shoves everything else out of sight. What happens to the original sensation, the pure experience of hearing? It gets lost in the shuffle, completely overwhelmed and forgotten. We miss reality. We enter a world of fantasy.

Here is another example: You are sitting in meditation and a sound strikes your ear. It is just an indistinct noise, sort of a muffled crunch;

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it could be anything. What happens next will probably be something like this. "What was that? Who did that? Where did that come from? How far away was that? Is it dangerous?" And on and on you go, getting no answers but your fantasy projection.

Conceptualization is an insidiously clever process. It creeps into your experience, and it simply takes over. When you hear a sound in meditation, pay bare attention to the experience of hearing. That and that only. What is really happening is so utterly simple that we can and do miss it altogether. Sound waves are striking the ear in a certain unique pattern. Those waves are being translated into electrical impulses within the brain, and those impulses present a sound pattern to consciousness. That is all. No pictures. No mind movies. No concepts. No interior dialogues about the question. Just noise. Reality is elegantly simple and unadorned. When you hear a sound, be mindful of the process of hearing. Everything else is just added chatter. Drop it. This same rule applies to every sensation, every emotion, every experience you may have. Look closely at your own experience. Dig down through the layers of mental bric-a-brac and see what is really there. You will be amazed how simple it is, and how beautiful.

There are times when a number of sensations may arise at once. You might have a thought of fear, a squeezing in the stomach, an aching back, and an itch on your left earlobe, all at the same time. Don't sit there in a quandary. Don't keep switching back and forth or wondering what to pick. One of them will be strongest. Just open yourself up, and the most insistent of these phenomena will intrude itself and demand your attention. So give it some attention just long enough to see it fade away. Then return to your breathing. If another one intrudes itself, let it in. When it is done, return to the breathing.

This process can be carried too far, however. Don't sit there looking for things to be mindful of. Keep your mindfulness on the breath until something else steps in and pulls your attention away. When

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you feel that happening, don't fight it. Let your attention flow naturally over to the distraction, and keep it there until the distraction evaporates. Then return to breathing. Don't seek out other physical or mental phenomena. Just return to breathing. Let them come to you. There will be times when you drift off, of course. Even after long practice you find yourself suddenly waking up, realizing you have been off the track for some while. Don't get discouraged. Realize that you have been off the track for such and such a length of time and go back to the breath. There is no need for any negative reaction at all. The very act of realizing that you have been off the track is an active awareness. It is an exercise of pure mindfulness all by itself.

Mindfulness grows by the exercise of mindfulness. It is like exercising a muscle. Every time you work it, you pump it up just a little. You make it a little stronger. The very fact that you have felt that wake-up sensation means that you have just improved your mindfulness power. That means you win. Move back to the breathing without regret. However, the regret is a conditioned reflex, and it may come along anyway—another mental habit. If you find yourself getting frustrated, feeling discouraged, or condemning yourself, just observe that with bare attention. It is just another distraction. Give it some attention and watch it fade away, and return to the breath.

The rules we have just reviewed can and should be applied thoroughly to all of your mental states. You are going to find this an utterly ruthless injunction. It is the toughest job that you will ever undertake. You will find yourself relatively willing to apply this technique to certain parts of your experience, and you will find yourself totally unwilling to use it on the other parts.

Meditation is a bit like mental acid. It eats away slowly at whatever you put it on. We humans are very odd beings. We like the taste of certain poisons, and we stubbornly continue to eat them even

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while they are killing us. Thoughts to which we are attached are poison. You will find yourself quite eager to dig some thoughts out by the roots while you jealously guard and cherish certain others. That is the human condition.

Vipassana meditation is not a game. Clear awareness is more than a pleasurable pastime. It is a road up and out of the quagmire in which we are all stuck, the swamp of our own desires and aversions. It is relatively easy to apply awareness to the nastier aspects of your existence. Once you have seen fear and depression evaporate under the hot, intense beacon of awareness, you will want to repeat that process. Those are the unpleasant mental states. They hurt. You want to get rid of those things because they bother you. It is a good deal harder to apply that same process to mental states that you cherish, like patriotism, or parental protectiveness, or true love. But it is just as necessary. Positive attachments hold you in the mud just as assuredly as negative attachments. You may rise above the mud far enough to breathe a bit more easily if you practice vipassana meditation with diligence. Vipassana meditation is the road to nibbana. And from the reports of those who have toiled their way to that lofty goal, it is well worth every effort involved.

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CHAPTER 13

Mindfulness (Sati)

Mindfulness is the English translation of the Pali word *sati*. *Sati* is an activity. What exactly is that? There can be no precise answer, at least not in words. Words are devised by the symbolic levels of the mind, and they describe those realities with which symbolic thinking deals. Mindfulness is presymbolic. It is not shackled to logic. Nevertheless, mindfulness can be experienced—rather easily—and it can be described, as long as you keep in mind that the words are only fingers pointing at the moon. They are not the moon itself. The actual experience lies beyond the words and above the symbols. Mindfulness could be described in completely different terms than will be used here, and each description could still be correct.

Mindfulness is a subtle process that you are using at this very moment. The fact that this process lies above and beyond words does not make it unreal—quite the reverse. Mindfulness is the reality that gives rise to words—the words that follow are simply pale shadows of reality. So it is important to understand that everything that follows here is analogy. It is not going to make perfect sense. It will always remain beyond verbal logic. But you can experience it. The meditation technique called vipassana (insight) that was introduced by the Buddha about twenty-five centuries ago is a set of mental activities specifically aimed at experiencing a state of uninterrupted mindfulness.

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When you first become aware of something, there is a fleeting instant of pure awareness just before you conceptualize the thing, before you identify it. That is a state of awareness. Ordinarily, this state is short-lived. It is that flashing split second just as you focus your eyes on the thing, just as you focus your mind on the thing, just before you objectify it, clamp down on it mentally, and segregate it from the rest of existence. It takes place just before you start thinking about it—before your mind says, "Oh, it's a dog." That flowing, soft-focused moment of pure awareness is mindfulness. In that brief flashing mind-moment you experience a thing as an un-thing. You experience a softly flowing moment of pure experience that is interlocked with the rest of reality, not separate from it. Mindfulness is very much like what you see with your peripheral vision as opposed to the hard focus of normal or central vision. Yet this moment of soft, unfocused, awareness contains a very deep sort of knowing that is lost as soon as you focus your mind and objectify the object into a thing. In the process of ordinary perception, the mindfulness step is so fleeting as to be unobservable. We have developed the habit of squandering our attention on all the remaining steps, focusing on the perception, cognizing the perception, labeling it, and most of all, getting involved in a long string of symbolic thought about it. That original moment of mindfulness is rapidly passed over. It is the purpose of vipassana meditation to train us to prolong that moment of awareness.

When this mindfulness is prolonged by using proper techniques, you find that this experience is profound and that it changes your entire view of the universe. This state of perception has to be learned, however, and it takes regular practice. Once you learn the technique, you will find that mindfulness has many interesting aspects.

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The Characteristics of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is mirror-thought. It reflects only what is presently happening and in exactly the way it is happening. There are no biases.

Mindfulness is nonjudgmental observation. It is that ability of the mind to observe without criticism. With this ability, one sees things without condemnation or judgment. One is surprised by nothing. One simply takes a balanced interest in things exactly as they are in their natural states. One does not decide and does not judge. One just observes. Please note that when we say, "One does not decide and does not judge," what we mean is that the meditator observes experiences very much like a scientist observing an object under a microscope without any preconceived notions, only to see the object exactly as it is. In the same way the meditator notices impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness.

It is psychologically impossible for us to objectively observe what is going on within us if we do not at the same time accept the occurrence of our various states of mind. This is especially true with unpleasant states of mind. In order to observe our own fear, we must accept the fact that we are afraid. We can't examine our own depression without accepting it fully. The same is true for irritation and agitation, frustration, and all those other uncomfortable emotional states. You can't examine something fully if you are busy rejecting its existence. Whatever experience we may be having, mindfulness just accepts it. It is simply another of life's occurrences, just another thing to be aware of. No pride, no shame, nothing personal at stake—what is there is there.

Mindfulness is an impartial watchfulness. It does not take sides. It does not get hung up in what is perceived. It just perceives. Mindfulness does not get infatuated with the good mental states. It does not try to sidestep the bad mental states. There is no clinging to the

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pleasant, no fleeing from the unpleasant. Mindfulness treats all experiences equally, all thoughts equally, all feelings equally. Nothing is suppressed. Nothing is repressed. Mindfulness does not play favorites.

Mindfulness is nonconceptual awareness. Another English term for *sati* is "bare attention." It is not thinking. It does not get involved with thought or concepts. It does not get hung up on ideas or opinions or memories. It just looks. Mindfulness registers experiences, but it does not compare them. It does not label them or categorize them. It just observes everything as if it was occurring for the first time. It is not analysis that is based on reflection and memory. It is, rather, the direct and immediate experiencing of whatever is happening, without the medium of thought. It comes before thought in the perceptual process.

Mindfulness is present-moment awareness. It takes place in the here and now. It is the observance of what is happening right now, in the present. It stays forever in the present, perpetually on the crest of the ongoing wave of passing time. If you are remembering your second-grade teacher, that is memory. When you then become aware that you are remembering your second-grade teacher, that is mindfulness. If you then conceptualize the process and say to yourself, "Oh, I am remembering," that is thinking.

Mindfulness is nonegotistic alertness. It takes place without reference to self. With mindfulness one sees all phenomena without references to concepts like "me," "my," or "mine." For example, suppose there is pain in your left leg. Ordinary consciousness would say, "I have a pain." Using mindfulness, one would simply note the sensation as a sensation. One would not tack on that extra concept "I." Mindfulness stops one from adding anything to perception or subtracting anything from it. One does not enhance anything. One does not emphasize anything. One just observes exactly what is there—without distortion.

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Mindfulness is awareness of change. It is observing the passing flow of experience. It is watching things as they are changing. It is seeing the birth, growth, and maturity of all phenomena. It is watching phenomena decay and die. Mindfulness is watching things moment by moment, continuously. It is observing all phenomena—physical, mental, or emotional—whatever is presently taking place in the mind. One just sits back and watches the show. Mindfulness is the observance of the basic nature of each passing phenomenon. It is watching the thing arising and passing away. It is seeing how that thing makes us feel and how we react to it. It is observing how it affects others. In mindfulness, one is an unbiased observer whose sole job is to keep track of the constantly passing show of the universe within.

Please note that last point. In mindfulness, one watches the universe within. The meditator who is developing mindfulness is not concerned with the external universe. It is there, but in meditation, one's field of study is one's own experience, one's thoughts, one's feelings, and one's perceptions. In meditation, one is one's own laboratory. The universe within has an enormous fund of information containing the reflection of the external world and much more. An examination of this material leads to total freedom.

Mindfulness is participatory observation. The meditator is both participant and observer at one and the same time. If one watches one's emotions or physical sensations, one is feeling them at that very same moment. Mindfulness is not an intellectual awareness. It is just awareness. The mirror-thought metaphor breaks down here. Mindfulness is objective, but it is not cold or unfeeling. It is the wakeful experience of life, an alert participation in the ongoing process of living.

Mindfulness is extremely difficult to define in words—not because it is complex, but because it is too simple and open. The

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same problem crops up in every area of human experience. The most basic concept is always the most difficult to pin down. Look at a dictionary and you will see a clear example. Long words generally have concise definitions, but short basic words like "the" and "be," can have definitions a page long. And in physics, the most difficult functions to describe are the most basic—those that deal with the most fundamental realities of quantum mechanics. Mindfulness is a presymbolic function. You can play with word symbols all day long and you will never pin it down completely. We can never fully express what it is. However, we can say what it does.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL ACTIVITIES

There are three fundamental activities of mindfulness. We can use these activities as functional definitions of the term: (a) mindfulness reminds us of what we are supposed to be doing, (b) it sees things as they really are, and (c) it sees the true nature of all phenomena. Let's examine these definitions in greater detail.

Mindfulness reminds you of what you are supposed to be doing

In meditation, you put your attention on one item. When your mind wanders from this focus, it is mindfulness that reminds you that your mind is wandering and what you are supposed to be doing. It is mindfulness that brings your mind back to the object of meditation. All of this occurs instantaneously and without internal dialogue. Mindfulness is not thinking. Repeated practice in meditation establishes this function as a mental habit that then carries over into the rest of your life. A serious meditator pays bare attention to occurrences all the time, day in, day out, whether formally sitting in meditation or not. This is a very lofty ideal toward which those who meditate may be

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working for a period of years or even decades. Our habit of getting stuck in thought is years old, and that habit will hang on in the most tenacious manner. The only way out is to be equally persistent in the cultivation of constant mindfulness. When mindfulness is present, you will notice when you become stuck in your thought patterns. It is that very noticing that allows you to back out of the thought process and free yourself from it. Mindfulness then returns your attention to its proper focus. If you are meditating at that moment, then your focus will be the formal object of meditation. If you are not in formal meditation, it will be just a pure application of bare attention itself, just a pure noticing of whatever comes up without getting involved—"Ah, this comes up…and now this, and now this…and now this."

Mindfulness is at one and the same time both bare attention itself and the function of reminding us to pay bare attention if we have ceased to do so. Bare attention is noticing. It reestablishes itself simply by noticing that it has not been present. As soon as you are noticing that you have not been noticing, then by definition you are noticing and then you are back again to paying bare attention.

Mindfulness creates its own distinct feeling in consciousness. It has a flavor—a light, clear, energetic flavor. By comparison, conscious thought is heavy, ponderous, and picky. But here again, these are just words. Your own practice will show you the difference. Then you will probably come up with your own words and the words used here will become superfluous. Remember, practice is the thing.

Mindfulness sees things as they really are

Mindfulness adds nothing to perception and it subtracts nothing. It distorts nothing. It is bare attention and just looks at whatever comes up. Conscious thought pastes things over our experience, loads us down with concepts and ideas, immerses us in a churning vortex of plans and worries, fears and fantasies. When mindful, you don't play

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that game. You just notice exactly what arises in the mind, then you notice the next thing. "Ah, this…and this…and now this." It is really very simple.

Mindfulness sees the true nature of all phenomena

Mindfulness and only mindfulness can perceive that the three prime characteristics that Buddhism teaches are the deepest truths of existence. In Pali these three are called *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), and *anatta* (selflessness—the absence of a permanent, unchanging entity that we call Soul or Self). These truths are not presented in Buddhist teaching as dogmas demanding blind faith. Buddhists feel that these truths are universal and self-evident to anyone who cares to investigate in a proper way. Mindfulness is that method of investigation. Mindfulness alone has the power to reveal the deepest level of reality available to human observation. At this level of inspection, one sees the following: (a) all conditioned things are inherently transitory; (b) every worldly thing is, in the end, unsatisfying; and (c) there are really no entities that are unchanging or permanent, only processes.

Mindfulness works like an electron microscope. That is, it operates on so fine a level that one can actually directly perceive those realities that are at best theoretical constructs to the conscious thought process. Mindfulness actually sees the impermanent character of every perception. It sees the transitory and passing nature of everything that is perceived. It also sees the inherently unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned things. It sees that there is no point grabbing onto any of these passing shows; peace and happiness cannot be found that way. And finally, mindfulness sees the inherent selflessness of all phenomena. It sees the way that we have arbitrarily selected a certain bundle of perceptions, chopped them off from the

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rest of the surging flow of experience, and then conceptualized them as separate, enduring entities. Mindfulness actually sees these things. It does not think about them, it sees them directly.

When it is fully developed, mindfulness sees these three attributes of existence directly, instantaneously, and without the intervening medium of conscious thought. In fact, even the attributes that we just covered are inherently unified. They don't really exist as separate items. They are purely the result of our struggle to take this fundamentally simple process called mindfulness and express it in the cumbersome and inadequate thought symbols of the conscious level. Mindfulness is a process, but it does not take place in steps. It is a holistic process that occurs as a unit: you notice your own lack of mindfulness; and that noticing itself is a result of mindfulness; and mindfulness is bare attention; and bare attention is noticing things exactly as they are without distortion; and the way they are is impermanent *(anicca),* unsatisfactory *(dukkha),* and selfless *(anatta)*. It all takes place in the space of a few mind-moments. This does not mean, however, that you will instantly attain liberation (freedom from all human weaknesses) as a result of your first moment of mindfulness. Learning to integrate this material into your conscious life is quite another process. And learning to prolong this state of mindfulness is still another. They are joyous processes, however, and they are well worth the effort.

MINDFULNESS (SATI) AND INSIGHT (VIPASSANA) MEDITATION

Mindfulness is the center of vipassana meditation and the key to the whole process. It is both the goal of this meditation and the means to that end. You reach mindfulness by being ever more mindful. One other Pali word that is translated into English as mindfulness is *appamada,* which means non-negligence or absence of madness. One

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who attends constantly to what is really going on in the mind achieves the state of ultimate sanity.

The Pali term *sati* also bears the connotation of remembering. It is not memory in the sense of ideas and pictures from the past, but rather clear, direct, wordless knowing of what is and what is not, of what is correct and what is incorrect, of what we are doing and how we should go about it. Mindfulness reminds meditators to apply their attention to the proper object at the proper time and to exert precisely the amount of energy needed to do that job. When this energy is properly applied, a meditator stays constantly in a state of calm and alertness. As long as this condition is maintained, those mind-states called "hindrances" or "psychic irritants" cannot arise—there is no greed, hatred, lust, or laziness.

But we all are human and we all err. Most of us err repeatedly. Despite honest effort, meditators let their mindfulness slip now and then and find themselves stuck in some regrettable, but normal, human failure. It is mindfulness that notices that change. And it is mindfulness that reminds us to apply the energy required to pull ourselves out. These slips happen over and over, but their frequency decreases with practice.

Once mindfulness has pushed these mental defilements aside, more wholesome states of mind can take their place. Hatred makes way for loving friendliness, lust is replaced by detachment. It is mindfulness that notices this change, too, and that reminds the vipassana meditator to maintain that extra little mental sharpness needed to retain these more desirable states of mind. Mindfulness makes possible the growth of wisdom and compassion. Without mindfulness they cannot develop to full maturity.

Deeply buried in the mind, there lies a mechanism that accepts what the mind experiences as beautiful and pleasant and rejects

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those experiences that are perceived as ugly and painful. This mechanism gives rise to those states of mind that we are training ourselves to avoid—things like greed, lust, hatred, aversion, and jealousy. We choose to avoid these hindrances, not because they are evil in the normal sense of the word, but because they are compulsive; because they take the mind over and capture the attention completely; because they keep going round and round in tight little circles of thought; and because they seal us off from living reality.

These hindrances cannot arise when mindfulness is present. Mindfulness is attention to present-moment reality, and therefore, directly antithetical to the dazed state of mind that characterizes impediments. As meditators, it is only when we let our mindfulness slip that the deep mechanisms of our mind take over—grasping, clinging, and rejecting. Then resistance emerges and obscures our awareness. We do not notice that the change is taking place—we are too busy with a thought of revenge, or greed, whatever it may be. While an untrained person will continue in this state indefinitely, a trained meditator will soon realize what is happening. It is mindfulness that notices the change. It is mindfulness that remembers the training received and that focuses our attention so that the confusion fades away. And it is mindfulness that then attempts to maintain itself indefinitely so that the resistance cannot arise again. Thus, mindfulness is the specific antidote for hindrances. It is both the cure and the preventive measure.

Fully developed mindfulness is a state of total nonattachment and utter absence of clinging to anything in the world. If we can maintain this state, no other means or device is needed to keep ourselves free of obstructions, to achieve liberation from our human weaknesses. Mindfulness is nonsuperficial awareness. It sees things deeply, down below the level of concepts and opinions. This sort of

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deep observation leads to total certainty, a complete absence of confusion. It manifests itself primarily as a constant and unwavering attention that never flags and never turns away.

This pure and unstained investigative awareness not only holds mental hindrances at bay, it lays bare their very mechanism and destroys them. Mindfulness neutralizes defilements in the mind. The result is a mind that remains unstained and invulnerable, completely undisturbed by the ups and downs of life.

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CHAPTER 14

Mindfulness versus Concentration

Vipassana meditation is something of a mental balancing act. You are going to be cultivating two separate qualities of the mind—mindfulness and concentration. Ideally, these two work together as a team. They pull in tandem, so to speak. Therefore it is important to cultivate them side by side and in a balanced manner. If one of the factors is strengthened at the expense of the another, the balance of the mind is lost and meditation becomes impossible.

Concentration and mindfulness are distinctly different functions. They each have their role to play in meditation, and the relationship between them is definite and delicate. Concentration is often called one-pointedness of mind. It consists of forcing the mind to remain on one static point. Please note the word *force*. Concentration is pretty much a forced type of activity. It can be developed by force, by sheer unremitting willpower. And once developed, it retains some of that forced flavor. Mindfulness, on the other hand, is a delicate function leading to refined sensibilities. These two are partners in the job of meditation. Mindfulness is the sensitive one. It notices things. Concentration provides the power. It keeps the attention pinned down to one item. Ideally, mindfulness is in this relationship. Mindfulness picks the objects of attention, and notices when the attention has gone astray. Concentration does the actual work of holding the

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attention steady on that chosen object. If either of these partners is weak, your meditation goes astray.

Concentration could be defined as that faculty of the mind that focuses single-pointedly on one object without interruption. It must be emphasized that true concentration is a wholesome one-pointedness of mind. That is, the state is free from greed, hatred, and delusion. Unwholesome one-pointedness is also possible, but it will not lead to liberation. You can be very single-minded in a state of lust. But that gets you nowhere. Uninterrupted focus on something that you hate does not help you at all. In fact, such unwholesome concentration is fairly short-lived even when it is achieved—especially when it is used to harm others. True concentration itself is free from such contaminants. It is a state in which the mind is gathered together and thus gains power and intensity. We might use the analogy of a lens. Parallel waves of sunlight falling on a piece of paper will do no more than warm the surface. But if that same amount of light, when focused through a lens, falls on a single point, the paper bursts into flames. Concentration is the lens. It produces the burning intensity necessary to see into the deeper reaches of the mind. Mindfulness selects the object that the lens will focus on and looks through the lens to see what is there.

Concentration should be regarded as a tool. Like any tool, it can be used for good or for ill. A sharp knife can be used to create a beautiful carving or to harm someone. It is all up to the one who uses the knife. Concentration is similar. Properly used, it can assist you toward liberation. But it can also be used in the service of the ego. It can operate in the framework of achievement and competition. You can use concentration to dominate others. You can use it to be selfish. The real problem is that concentration alone will not give you a perspective on yourself. It won't throw light on the basic problems of selfishness and the nature of suffering. It can be used to dig

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down into deep psychological states. But even then, the forces of egotism won't be understood. Only mindfulness can do that. If mindfulness is not there to look into the lens and see what has been uncovered, then it is all for nothing. Only mindfulness understands. Only mindfulness brings wisdom. Concentration has other limitations, too.

Really deep concentration can only take place under certain specific conditions. Buddhists go to a lot of trouble to build meditation halls and monasteries. Their main purpose is to create a physical environment free of distractions in which to learn this skill. No noise, no interruptions. Just as important, however, is the creation of a distraction-free emotional environment. The development of concentration will be blocked by the presence of the five hindrances that we examined in chapter 12: desire for sensual pleasure, aversion, mental lethargy, agitation, and doubt.

A monastery is a controlled environment where this sort of emotional noise is kept to a minimum. Members of the opposite sex don't live together there. Therefore, there is less opportunity for lust to arise. Possessions aren't allowed, thereby eliminating ownership squabbles and reducing the chance for greed and covetousness. Another hurdle for concentration should also be mentioned. In really deep concentration, you get so absorbed in the object of concentration that you forget all about trifles. Like your body, for instance, and your identity, and everything around you. Here again the monastery is a useful convenience. It is nice to know that there is somebody to take care of you by watching over all the mundane matters of food and physical security. Without such assurance, one hesitates to go as deeply into concentration as one might.

Mindfulness, on the other hand, is free from all these drawbacks. Mindfulness is not dependent on any such particular circumstance, physical or otherwise. It is a pure noticing factor. Thus it is free to

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notice whatever comes up—lust, hatred, or noise. Mindfulness is not limited by any condition. It exists to some extent in every moment, in every circumstance that arises. Also, mindfulness has no fixed object of focus. It observes change. Thus, it has an unlimited number of objects of attention. It just looks at whatever is passing through the mind, and it does not categorize. Distractions and interruptions are noticed with the same amount of attention as the formal objects of meditation. In a state of pure mindfulness, your attention just flows along with whatever changes are taking place in the mind. "Shift, shift, shift. Now this, now this, and now this."

You can't develop mindfulness by force. Active teeth-gritting willpower won't do you any good at all. As a matter of fact, it will hinder progress. Mindfulness cannot be cultivated by struggle. It grows by realizing, by letting go, by just settling down in the moment and letting yourself get comfortable with whatever you are experiencing. This does not mean that mindfulness happens all by itself. Far from it. Energy is required. Effort is required. But this effort is different from force. Mindfulness is cultivated by a gentle effort. You cultivate mindfulness by constantly reminding yourself in a gentle way to maintain your awareness of whatever is happening right now. Persistence and a light touch are the secrets. Mindfulness is cultivated by constantly pulling yourself back to a state of awareness, gently, gently, gently.

Mindfulness can't be used in any selfish way, either. It is egoless alertness. There is no "me" in a state of pure mindfulness. So there is no self to be selfish. On the contrary, it is mindfulness that gives you real perspective on yourself. It allows you to take that crucial mental step backward from your own desires and aversions so that you can then look and say, "Aha, so that's how I really am."

In a state of mindfulness, you see yourself exactly as you are. You see your own selfish behavior. You see your own suffering. And you

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see how you create that suffering. You see how you hurt others. You pierce right through the layer of lies that you normally tell yourself, and you see what is really there. Mindfulness leads to wisdom.

Mindfulness is not trying to achieve anything. It is just looking. Therefore, desire and aversion are not involved. Competition and struggle for achievement have no place in the process. Mindfulness does not aim at anything. It just sees whatever is already there.

Mindfulness is a broader and larger function than concentration. It is an all-encompassing function. Concentration is exclusive. It settles down on one item and ignores everything else. Mindfulness is inclusive. It stands back from the focus of attention and watches with a broad focus, quick to notice any change that occurs. If you have focused the mind on a stone, concentration will see only the stone. Mindfulness stands back from this process, aware of the stone, aware of concentration focusing on the stone, aware of the intensity of that focus, and instantly aware of the shift of attention when concentration is distracted. It is mindfulness that notices that the distraction has occurred, and it is mindfulness that redirects the attention to the stone. Mindfulness is more difficult to cultivate than concentration because it is a deeper-reaching function. Concentration is merely focusing the mind, rather like a laser beam. It has the power to burn its way deep into the mind and illuminate what is there. But it does not understand what it sees. Mindfulness can examine the mechanics of selfishness and understand what it sees. Mindfulness can pierce the mystery of suffering and the mechanism of discomfort. Mindfulness can make you free.

There is, however, another Catch-22. Mindfulness does not react to what it sees. It just sees and understands. Mindfulness is the essence of patience. Therefore, whatever you see must simply be accepted, acknowledged, and dispassionately observed. This is not easy, but it is utterly necessary. We are ignorant. We are selfish and

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greedy and boastful. We lust, and we lie. These are facts. Mindfulness means seeing these facts and being patient with ourselves, accepting ourselves as we are. That goes against the grain. We don't want to accept it. We want to deny it. Or change it, or justify it. But acceptance is the essence of mindfulness. If we want to grow in mindfulness, we must accept what mindfulness finds. It may be boredom, irritation, or fear. It may be weakness, inadequacy, or faults. Whatever it is, that is the way we are. That is what is real.

Mindfulness simply accepts whatever is there. If you want to grow in mindfulness, patient acceptance is the only route. Mindfulness grows only one way: by continuous practice of mindfulness, by simply trying to be mindful, and that means being patient. The process cannot be forced and it cannot be rushed. It proceeds at its own pace.

Concentration and mindfulness go hand in hand in the job of meditation. Mindfulness directs the power of concentration. Mindfulness is the manager of the operation. Concentration furnishes the power by which mindfulness can penetrate into the deepest level of mind. Their cooperation results in insight and understanding. These must be cultivated together in a balanced manner. Just a bit more emphasis is given to mindfulness, because mindfulness is the center of meditation. The deepest levels of concentration are not really needed to do the job of liberation. Still, a balance is essential. Too much awareness without calm to balance it will result in a wildly over-sensitized state similar to abusing LSD. Too much concentration without a balancing ratio of awareness will result in the "stone buddha" syndrome, where you get so tranquilized that you sit there like a rock. Both of these are to be avoided.

The initial stages of mental cultivation are especially delicate. Too much emphasis on mindfulness at this point will actually retard the development of concentration. When getting started in meditation,

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one of the first things you will notice is how incredibly active the mind really is. The Theravada tradition calls this phenomenon "monkey mind." The Tibetan tradition likens it to a waterfall of thought. If you emphasize the awareness function at this point, there will be so much to be aware of that concentration will be impossible. Don't get discouraged. This happens to everybody. And there is a simple solution. Put most of your effort into one-pointedness at the beginning. Just keep calling the attention from wandering over and over again. Tough it out. Full instructions on how to do this are in chapters 7 and 8. A couple of months down the track and you will have developed concentration power. Then you can start pumping your energy into mindfulness. Do not, however, go so far with concentration that you find yourself going into a stupor.

Mindfulness still is the more important of the two components. It should be built as soon as you comfortably can do so. Mindfulness provides the needed foundation for the subsequent development of deeper concentration. Most blunders in this area of balance will correct themselves in time. Right concentration develops naturally in the wake of strong mindfulness. The more you develop the noticing factor, the quicker you will notice the distraction, and the quicker you will pull out of it and return to the formal object of attention. The natural result is increased concentration. And as concentration develops, it assists the development of mindfulness. The more concentration power you have, the less chance there is of launching off on a long chain of analysis about the distraction. You simply note the distraction and return your attention to where it is supposed to be.

Thus the two factors tend to balance and support each other's growth quite naturally. Just about the only rule you need to follow at this point is to put your effort on concentration at the beginning until the monkey mind phenomenon has cooled down a bit. After that, emphasize mindfulness. If you find yourself getting frantic,

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emphasize concentration. If you find yourself going into a stupor, emphasize mindfulness. Overall, mindfulness is the one to emphasize.

Mindfulness guides your development in meditation because mindfulness has the ability to be aware of itself. It is mindfulness that will give you a perspective on your practice. Mindfulness will let you know how you are doing. But don't worry too much about that. This is not a race. You are not in competition with anybody, and there is no schedule.

One of the most difficult things to learn is that mindfulness is not dependent on any emotional or mental state. We have certain images of meditation. Meditation is something done in quiet caves by tranquil people who move slowly. Those are training conditions. They are set up to foster concentration and to learn the skill of mindfulness. Once you have learned that skill, however, you can dispense with the training restrictions, and you should. You don't need to move at a snail's pace to be mindful. You don't even need to be calm. You can be mindful while solving problems in intensive calculus. You can be mindful in the middle of a football scrimmage. You can even be mindful in the midst of a raging fury. Mental and physical activities are no bar to mindfulness. If you find your mind extremely active, then simply observe the nature and degree of that activity. It is just a part of the passing show within.

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CHAPTER 15

Meditation in Everyday Life

Every musician plays scales. When you begin to study the piano, that's the first thing you learn, and you never stop playing scales. The finest concert pianists in the world still play scales. It's a basic skill that can't be allowed to get rusty.

Every baseball player practices batting. It's the first thing you learn in Little League, and you never stop practicing. Every World Series game begins with batting practice. Basic skills must always remain sharp.

Seated meditation is the arena in which meditators practice their own fundamental skills. The game the meditator is playing is the experience of his own life, and the instrument upon which he plays is his own sensory apparatus. Even the most seasoned meditator continues to practice seated meditation, because it tunes and sharpens the basic mental skills he needs for his particular game. We must never forget, however, that seated meditation itself is not the game. It's the practice. The game in which those basic skills are to be applied is the rest of one's experiential existence. Meditation that is not applied to daily living is sterile and limited.

The purpose of vipassana meditation is nothing less than the radical and permanent transformation of your entire sensory and cognitive experience. It is meant to revolutionize the whole of your life experience. Those periods of seated practice are times set aside for

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instilling new mental habits. You learn new ways to receive and understand sensation. You develop new methods of dealing with conscious thought and new modes of attending to the incessant rush of your own emotions. These new mental behaviors must be made to carry over into the rest of your life. Otherwise, meditation remains dry and fruitless, a theoretical segment of your existence that is unconnected to all the rest. Some effort to connect these two segments is essential. A certain amount of carryover will take place spontaneously, but that process will be slow and unreliable. You are very likely to be left with the feeling that you are getting nowhere and to drop the process as unrewarding.

One of the most memorable events in your meditation career is the moment when you first realize that you are meditating in the midst of a perfectly ordinary activity. You are driving down the freeway or carrying out the trash and it just turns on by itself. This unplanned outpouring of the skills you have been so carefully fostering is a genuine joy. It gives you a tiny window on the future. You catch a spontaneous glimpse of what the practice really means. The possibility strikes you that this transformation of consciousness could actually become a permanent feature of your experience. You realize that you could actually spend the rest of your days standing aside from the debilitating clamoring of your own obsessions, no longer frantically hounded by your own needs and greeds. You get a tiny taste of what it is like to just stand aside and watch it all flow past. It's a magic moment.

That vision is likely to remain unfulfilled, however, unless you actively seek to promote the carryover process. The most important moment in meditation is the instant you leave the cushion. When your practice session is over, you can jump up and drop the whole thing, or you can bring those skills with you into the rest of your activities.

It is crucial for you to understand what meditation is. It is not some

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special posture, and it's not just a set of mental exercises. Meditation is the cultivation of mindfulness and the application of that mindfulness once cultivated. You do not have to sit to meditate. You can meditate while washing the dishes. You can meditate in the shower, or roller skating, or typing letters. Meditation is awareness, and it must be applied to each and every activity of one's life. This isn't easy.

We specifically cultivate awareness through the seated posture in a quiet place because that's the easiest situation in which to do so. Meditation in motion is harder. Meditation in the midst of fast-paced noisy activity is harder still. And meditation in the midst of intensely egoistic activities like romance or an argument is the ultimate challenge. Beginners will have their hands full with less stressful activities.

Yet the ultimate goal of practice remains: to build one's concentration and awareness to a level of strength that will remain unwavering even in the midst of the pressures of life in contemporary society. Life offers many challenges and the serious meditator is never bored.

Carrying your meditation into the events of your daily life is not a simple process. Try it and you will see. That transition point between the end of your meditation session and the beginning of "real life" is a long jump. It's too long for most of us. We find our calm and concentration evaporating within minutes, leaving us apparently no better off than before. In order to bridge this gulf, Buddhists over the centuries have devised an array of exercises aimed at smoothing the transition. They take that jump and break it down into little steps. Each step can be practiced by itself.

Walking Meditation

Our everyday existence is full of motion and activity. Sitting utterly motionless for hours on end is nearly the opposite of normal experience. Those states of clarity and tranquillity we foster in the midst

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of absolute stillness tend to dissolve as soon as we move. We need some transitional exercise that will teach us the skill of remaining calm and aware in the midst of motion. Walking meditation helps us make that transition from static repose to everyday life. It's meditation in motion, and it is often used as an alternative to sitting. Walking is especially good for those times when you are extremely restless. An hour of walking meditation will often get you through that restless energy and still yield considerable quantities of clarity. You can then go on to the seated meditation with greater profit.

Standard Buddhist practice advocates frequent retreats to complement your daily sitting practice. A retreat is a relatively long period of time devoted exclusively to meditation. One- or two-day retreats are common for lay people. Seasoned meditators in a monastic situation may spend months at a time doing nothing else. Such practice is rigorous, and it makes sizable demands on both mind and body. Unless you have been at it for several years, there is a limit to how long you can sit and profit. Ten solid hours of the seated posture will produce in most beginners a state of agony that far exceeds their concentration powers. A profitable retreat must therefore be conducted with some change of posture and some movement. The usual pattern is to intersperse blocks of sitting with blocks of walking meditation. An hour of each with short breaks between is common.

To do the walking meditation, you need a private place with enough space for at least five to ten paces in a straight line. You are going to be walking back and forth very slowly, and to the eyes of most Westerners you'll look curious and disconnected from everyday life. This is not the sort of exercise you want to perform on the front lawn where you'll attract unnecessary attention. Choose a private place.

The physical directions are simple. Select an unobstructed area and start at one end. Stand for a minute in an attentive position. Your

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arms can be held in any way that is comfortable, in front, in back, or at your sides. Then while breathing in, lift the heel of one foot. While breathing out, rest that foot on its toes. Again while breathing in, lift that foot, carry it forward and while breathing out, bring the foot down and touch the floor. Repeat this for the other foot. Walk very slowly to the opposite end, stand for one minute, then turn around very slowly, and stand there for another minute before you walk back. Then repeat the process.

Keep your head up and your neck relaxed. Keep your eyes open to maintain balance, but don't look at anything in particular. Walk naturally. Maintain the slowest pace that is comfortable, and pay no attention to your surroundings. Watch out for tensions building up in the body, and release them as soon as you spot them. Don't make any particular attempt to be graceful. Don't try to look pretty. This is not an athletic exercise or a dance. It is an exercise in awareness. Your objective is to attain total alertness, heightened sensitivity, and a full, unblocked experience of the motion of walking. Put all of your attention on the sensations coming from the feet and legs. Try to register as much information as possible about each foot as it moves. Dive into the pure sensation of walking, and notice every subtle nuance of the movement. Feel each individual muscle as it moves. Experience every tiny change in tactile sensation as the feet press against the floor, and then lift again.

Notice the way these apparently smooth motions are composed of a complex series of tiny jerks. Try to miss nothing. In order to heighten your sensitivity, you can break the movement down into distinct components. Each foot goes through a lift, a swing, and then a down tread. Each of these components has a beginning, middle, and end. In order to tune yourself in to this series of motions, you can start by making explicit mental notes of each stage.

Make a mental note of "lifting, swinging, coming down, touching

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floor, pressing," and so on. This is a training procedure to familiarize you with the sequence of motions and to make sure that you don't miss any. As you become more aware of the myriad subtle events going on, you won't have time for words. You will find yourself immersed in a fluid, unbroken awareness of motion. The feet will become your whole universe. If your mind wanders, note the distraction in the usual way, then return your attention to walking. Don't look at your feet while you are doing all of this, and don't walk back and forth watching a mental picture of your feet and legs. Don't think, just feel. You don't need the concept of feet, and you don't need pictures. Just register the sensations as they flow. In the beginning, you will probably have some difficulties with balance. You are using the leg muscles in a new way, and a learning period is natural. If frustration arises, just note that and let it go.

The vipassana walking technique is designed to flood your consciousness with simple sensations, and to do it so thoroughly that all else is pushed aside. There is no room for thought and therefore no room for emotion. There is no time for grasping and none for freezing the activity into a series of concepts. There is no need for a sense of self. There is only the sweep of tactile and kinesthetic sensation, an endless and ever-changing flood of raw experience. We are learning here to escape into reality, rather than from it. Whatever insights we gain are directly applicable to the rest of our notion-filled lives.

Postures

The goal of our practice is to become fully aware of all facets of our experience in an unbroken, moment-to-moment flow. Much of what we do and experience is completely unconscious in the sense that we do it with little or no attention. Our minds are on something else

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entirely. We spend most of our time running on automatic pilot, lost in the fog of daydreams and preoccupations.

One of the most frequently ignored aspects of our existence is our body. The technicolor cartoon show inside our head is so alluring that we tend to remove all of our attention from the kinesthetic and tactile senses. That information is pouring up the nerves and into the brain every second, but we have largely sealed it off from consciousness. It pours into the lower levels of the mind, and it gets no further. Buddhists have developed an exercise to open the floodgates and let this material through to consciousness. It's another way of making the unconscious conscious.

Your body goes through all kinds of contortions in the course of a single day. You sit and you stand. You walk and lie down. You bend, run, crawl, and sprawl. Meditation teachers urge you to become aware of this constantly ongoing dance. As you go through your day, spend a few seconds every few minutes to check your posture. Don't do it in a judgmental way. This is not an exercise to correct your posture or to improve your appearance. Sweep your attention down through the body and feel how you are holding it. Make a silent mental note of "walking" or "sitting" or "lying down" or "standing." It all sounds absurdly simple, but don't slight this procedure. This is a powerful exercise. If you do it thoroughly, if you really instill this mental habit deeply, it can revolutionize your experience. It taps you into a whole new dimension of sensation, and you feel like a blind man whose sight has been restored.

Slow-motion Activity

Every action you perform is made up of separate components. The simple action of tying your shoelaces is made up of a complex series of subtle motions. Most of these details go unobserved. In order to

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promote the overall habit of mindfulness, you can perform simple activities at very low speed—making an effort to pay full attention to every nuance of the act.

Sitting at a table and drinking a cup of tea is one example. There is much here to be experienced. View your posture as you are sitting, and feel the handle of the cup between your fingers. Smell the aroma of the tea, notice the placement of the cup, the tea, your arm, and the table. Watch the intention to raise your arm arise within your mind, feel your arm as it rises, feel the cup against your lip and liquid pouring into your mouth. Taste the tea, then watch the arising of the intention to lower your arm. The entire process is fascinating and beautiful, if you attend to it fully, paying detached attention to every sensation and to the flow of thought and emotion.

This same tactic can be applied to many of your daily activities. Intentionally slowing down your thoughts, words, and movements allows you to penetrate far more deeply into them than you otherwise could. What you find there is utterly astonishing. In the beginning, it is very difficult to keep this deliberately slow pace during most regular activities, but skill grows with time. Profound realizations occur during sitting meditation, but also profound revelations can take place when we really examine our own inner workings in the midst of day-to-day activities. This is the laboratory where we really start to see the mechanisms of our own emotions and the operations of our passions. Here is where we can truly gauge the reliability of our reasoning and glimpse the difference between our true motives and that armor of pretense that we wear to fool ourselves and others.

We will find a great deal of this information surprising, much of it disturbing, but all of it useful. Bare attention brings order into the clutter that collects in those untidy little hidden corners of the mind. As you achieve clear comprehension in the midst of life's ordinary activities, you gain the ability to remain rational and peaceful while

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you throw the penetrating light of mindfulness into those irrational mental nooks and crannies. You start to see the extent to which you are responsible for your own mental suffering. You see your own miseries, fears, and tensions as self-generated. You see the way you cause your own suffering, weakness, and limitations. And the more deeply you understand these mental processes, the less hold they have on you.

Breath Coordination

In seated meditation, our primary focus is the breath. Total concentration on the ever-changing breath brings us squarely into the present moment. The same principle can be used in the midst of movement. You can coordinate the activity in which you are involved with your breathing. This lends a flowing rhythm to your movement, and it smoothes out many of the abrupt transitions. Activity becomes easier to focus on, and mindfulness is increased. Your awareness thus stays more easily in the present. Ideally, meditation should be a twenty-four-hour-a-day practice. This is a highly practical suggestion.

A state of mindfulness is a state of mental readiness. The mind is not burdened with preoccupations or bound in worries. Whatever comes up can be dealt with instantly. When you are truly mindful, your nervous system has a freshness and resiliency that fosters insight. A problem arises, and you simply deal with it, quickly, efficiently, and with a minimum of fuss. You don't stand there in a dither, and you don't run off to a quiet corner so you can sit down and meditate about it. You simply deal with it. And in those rare circumstances when no solution seems possible, you don't worry about that. You just go on to the next thing that needs your attention. Your intuition becomes a very practical faculty.

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Stolen Moments

The concept of wasted time does not exist for a serious meditator. Little dead spaces during your day can be turned to profit. Every spare moment can be used for meditation. Sitting anxiously in the dentist's office, meditate on your anxiety. Feeling irritated while standing in a line at the bank, meditate on irritation. Bored, twiddling your thumbs at the bus stop, meditate on boredom. Try to stay alert and aware throughout the day. Be mindful of exactly what is taking place right now, even if it is tedious drudgery. Take advantage of moments when you are alone. Take advantage of activities that are largely mechanical. Use every spare second to be mindful. Use all the moments you can.

Concentration on All Activities

You should try to maintain mindfulness of every activity and perception through the day, starting with the first perception when you awake and ending with the last thought before you fall asleep. This is an incredibly tall goal to shoot for. Don't expect to be able to achieve this work soon. Just take it slowly and let your abilities grow over time. The most feasible way to go about the task is to divide your day up into chunks. Dedicate a certain interval to mindfulness of posture, then extend this mindfulness to other simple activities: eating, washing, dressing, and so forth. Some time during the day, you can set aside fifteen minutes or so to practice the observation of specific types of mental states: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings, for instance; or the hindrances, or thoughts. The specific routine is up to you. The idea is to get practice at spotting the various items, and to preserve your state of mindfulness as fully as you can throughout the day.

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Try to achieve a daily routine in which there is as little difference as possible between seated meditation and the rest of your experience. Let the one slide naturally into the other. Your body is almost never still. There is always motion to observe. At the very least, there is breathing. Your mind never stops chattering, except in the very deepest states of concentration. There is always something coming up to observe. If you seriously apply your meditation, you will never be at a loss for something worthy of your attention.

Your practice must be made to apply to your everyday living situation. That is your laboratory. It provides the trials and challenges you need to make your practice deep and genuine. It's the fire that purifies your practice of deception and error, the acid test that shows you when you are getting somewhere and when you are fooling yourself. If your meditation isn't helping you to cope with everyday conflicts and struggles, then it is shallow. If your day-to-day emotional reactions are not becoming clearer and easier to manage, then you are wasting your time. And you never know how you are doing until you actually make that test.

The practice of mindfulness is supposed to be a universal practice. You don't do it sometimes and drop it the rest of the time. You do it all the time. Meditation that is successful only when you are withdrawn in some soundproof ivory tower is still undeveloped. Insight meditation is the practice of moment-to-moment mindfulness. The meditator learns to pay bare attention to birth, growth, and decay of all the phenomena of the mind. She turns from none of it and lets none of it escape. This includes thoughts and emotions, activities and desires, the whole show. She watches it all and watches it continuously. It matters not whether it is lovely or horrid, beautiful or shameful. She sees the way it is and the way it changes. No aspect of experience is excluded or avoided. It is a very thoroughgoing procedure.

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If you are moving through your daily activities and you find yourself in a state of boredom, then meditate on your boredom. Find out how it feels, how it works, and what it is composed of. If you are angry, meditate on the anger. Explore the mechanics of anger. Don't run from it. If you find yourself sitting in the grip of a dark depression, meditate on that depression. Investigate depression in a detached and inquiring way. Don't flee from it blindly. Explore the maze and chart its pathways. That way you will be better able to cope with the next depression that comes along.

Meditating your way through the ups and downs of daily life is the whole point of vipassana. This kind of practice is extremely rigorous and demanding, but it engenders a state of mental flexibility that is beyond comparison. A meditator keeps his mind open every second. He is constantly investigating life, inspecting his own experience, viewing existence in a detached and inquisitive way. Thus, he is constantly open to truth in any form, from any source, and at any time. This is the state of mind you need for liberation.

It is said that one may attain enlightenment at any moment if the mind is kept in a state of meditative readiness. The tiniest, most ordinary perception can be the stimulus: a view of the moon, the cry of a bird, the sound of the wind in the trees. It's not so important what is perceived as the way in which you attend to that perception. That state of open readiness is essential. It could happen to you right now if you are ready. The tactile sensation of this book in your fingers could be the cue. The sound of these words in your head might be enough. You could attain enlightenment right now, if you are ready.

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CHAPTER 16

What's in It for You

You can expect certain benefits from your meditation. The initial ones are practical things; the later stages are profoundly transcendental. They run together from the simple to the sublime. We will set forth some of them here. Your own practice can show you the truth. Your own experience is all that counts.

Those things that we called hindrances or defilements are more than just unpleasant mental habits. They are the primary manifestations of the ego process itself. The ego sense itself is essentially a feeling of separation—a perception of distance between that which we call *me* and that which we call *other*. This perception is held in place only if it is constantly exercised, and the hindrances constitute that exercise.

Greed and lust are attempts to "get some of that" for me; hatred and aversion are attempts to place greater distance between "me and that." All the defilements depend upon the perception of a barrier between self and other, and all of them foster this perception every time they are exercised. Mindfulness perceives things deeply and with great clarity. It brings our attention to the root of the defilements and lays bare their mechanism. It sees their fruits and their effects upon us. It cannot be fooled. Once you have clearly seen what greed really is and what it really does to you and to others, you just naturally cease to engage in it. When a child burns her hand on

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a hot oven, you don't have to tell her to pull it back; she does it naturally, without conscious thought and without decision. There is a reflex action built into the nervous system for just that purpose, and it works faster than thought. By the time the child perceives the sensation of heat and begins to cry, the hand has already been jerked back from the source of pain. Mindfulness works in very much the same way: it is wordless, spontaneous, and utterly efficient. Clear mindfulness inhibits the growth of hindrances; continuous mindfulness extinguishes them. Thus, as genuine mindfulness is built up, the walls of the ego itself are broken down, craving diminishes, defensiveness and rigidity lessen, you become more open, accepting, and flexible. You learn to share your loving friendliness.

Traditionally, Buddhists are reluctant to talk about the ultimate nature of human beings. But those who are willing to make descriptive statements at all usually say that our ultimate essence or buddha nature is pure, holy, and inherently good. The only reason that human beings appear otherwise is that their experience of that ultimate essence has been hindered; it has been blocked like water behind a dam. The hindrances are the bricks of which that dam is built. As mindfulness dissolves the bricks, holes are punched in the dam, and compassion and sympathetic joy come flooding forward. As meditative mindfulness develops, your whole experience of life changes. Your experience of being alive, the very sensation of being conscious becomes lucid and precise, no longer just an unnoticed background for your preoccupations. It becomes a thing consistently perceived.

Each passing moment stands out as itself; the moments no longer blend together in an unnoticed blur. Nothing is glossed over or taken for granted, no experiences labeled as merely "ordinary." Everything looks bright and special. You refrain from categorizing your experiences into mental pigeonholes. Descriptions and interpretations are chucked aside, and each moment of time is allowed to speak for

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itself. You actually listen to what it has to say, and you listen as if it were being heard for the very first time. When your meditation becomes really powerful, it also becomes constant. You consistently observe with bare attention both the breath and every mental phenomenon. You feel increasingly stable, increasingly moored in the stark and simple experience of moment-to-moment existence.

Once your mind is free from thought, it becomes clearly wakeful and at rest in an utterly simple awareness. This awareness cannot be described adequately. Words are not enough. It can only be experienced. Breath ceases to be just breath; it is no longer limited to the static and familiar concept you once held. You no longer see it as a succession of just inhalations and exhalations, an insignificant monotonous experience. Breath becomes a living, changing process, something alive and fascinating. It is no longer something that takes place in time; it is perceived as the present moment itself. Time is seen as a concept, not an experienced reality.

This is a simplified, rudimentary awareness that is stripped of all extraneous detail. It is grounded in a living flow of the present, and it is marked by a pronounced sense of reality. You know absolutely that this is real, more real than anything you have ever experienced. Once you have gained this perception with absolute certainty, you have a fresh vantage point, a new criterion against which to gauge all of your experience. After this perception, you see clearly those moments when you are participating in bare phenomena alone, and those moments when you are disturbing phenomena with mental attitudes. You watch yourself twisting reality with mental comments, with stale images and personal opinions. You know what you are doing, when you are doing it. You become increasingly sensitive to the ways in which you miss the true reality, and you gravitate toward the simple objective perspective that does not add to or subtract from what is. You become a very perceptive individual. From this

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vantage point, all is seen with clarity. The innumerable activities of mind and body stand out in glaring detail. You mindfully observe the incessant rise and fall of breath; you watch an endless stream of bodily sensations and movements; you scan the rapid succession of thoughts and feelings, and you sense the rhythm that echoes from the steady march of time. And in the midst of all this ceaseless movement, there is no watcher, there is only watching.

In this state of perception, nothing remains the same for two consecutive moments. Everything is seen to be in constant transformation. All things are born, all things grow old and die. There are no exceptions. You awaken to the unceasing changes of your own life. You look around and see everything in flux, everything, everything, everything. It is all rising and falling, intensifying and diminishing, coming into existence and passing away. All of life, every bit of it from the infinitesimal to the Pacific Ocean, is in motion constantly. You perceive the universe as a great flowing river of experience. Your most cherished possessions are slipping away, and so is your very life. Yet this impermanence is no reason for grief. You stand there transfixed, staring at this incessant activity, and your response is wondrous joy. It's all moving, dancing, and full of life.

As you continue to observe these changes and you see how it all fits together, you become aware of the intimate connectedness of all mental, sensory, and affective phenomena. You watch one thought leading to another, you see destruction giving rise to emotional reactions and feelings giving rise to more thoughts. Actions, thoughts, feelings, desires—you see all of them intimately linked together in a delicate fabric of cause and effect. You watch pleasurable experiences arise and fall, and you see that they never last; you watch pain come uninvited and you watch yourself anxiously struggling to throw it off; you see yourself fail. It all happens over and over while you stand back quietly and just watch it all work.

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Out of this living laboratory itself comes an inner and unassailable conclusion. You see that your life is marked by disappointment and frustration, and you clearly see the source. These reactions arise out of your own inability to get what you want, your fear of losing what you have already gained, and your habit of never being satisfied with what you have. These are no longer theoretical concepts—you have seen these things for yourself, and you know that they are real. You perceive your own fear, your own basic insecurity in the face of life and death. It is a profound tension that goes all the way down to the root of thought and makes all of life a struggle. You watch yourself anxiously groping about, fearfully grasping after solid, trustworthy ground. You see yourself endlessly grasping for something, anything, to hold onto in the midst of all these shifting sands, and you see that there is nothing to hold onto, nothing that doesn't change.

You see the pain of loss and grief, you watch yourself being forced to adjust to painful developments day after day in your own ordinary existence. You witness the tensions and conflicts inherent in the very process of everyday living, and you see how superficial most of your concerns really are. You watch the progress of pain, sickness, old age, and death. You learn to marvel that all these horrible things are not fearful at all. They are simply reality.

Through this intensive study of the negative aspects of your existence, you become deeply acquainted with *dukkha,* the unsatisfactory nature of all existence. You begin to perceive *dukkha* at all levels of our human life, from the obvious down to the most subtle. You see the way suffering inevitably follows in the wake of clinging, as soon as you grasp anything, pain inevitably follows. Once you become fully acquainted with the whole dynamic of desire, you become sensitized to it. You see where it rises, when it rises, and how it affects you. You watch it operate over and over, manifesting through every sense channel, taking control of the mind and making consciousness its slave.

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In the midst of every pleasant experience, you watch your own craving and clinging take place. In the midst of unpleasant experiences, you watch a very powerful resistance take hold. You do not block these phenomena, you just watch them; you see them as the very stuff of human thought. You search for that thing you call "me," but what you find is a physical body and how you have identified your sense of yourself with that bag of skin and bones. You search further, and you find all manner of mental phenomena, such as emotions, thought patterns, and opinions, and see how you identify the sense of yourself with each of them. You watch yourself becoming possessive, protective, and defensive over these pitiful things, and you see how crazy that is. You rummage furiously among these various items, constantly searching for yourself—physical matter, bodily sensations, feelings, and emotions—it all keeps whirling round and round as you root through it, peering into every nook and cranny, endlessly hunting for "me."

You find nothing. In all that collection of mental hardware in this endless stream of ever-shifting experience, all you can find is innumerable impersonal processes that have been caused and conditioned by previous processes. There is no static self to be found; it is all process. You find thoughts but no thinker, you find emotions and desires, but nobody doing them. The house itself is empty. There is nobody home.

Your whole view of self changes at this point. You begin to look upon yourself as if you were a newspaper photograph. When viewed with the naked eyes, the photograph you see is a definite image. When viewed through a magnifying glass, it all breaks down into an intricate configuration of dots. Similarly, under the penetrating gaze of mindfulness, the feeling of a self, an "I" or "being" anything, loses its solidity and dissolves. There comes a point in insight meditation

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where the three characteristics of existence—impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness—come rushing home with concept-searing force. You vividly experience the impermanence of life, the suffering nature of human existence, and the truth of no-self. You experience these things so graphically that you suddenly awake to the utter futility of craving, grasping, and resistance. In the clarity and purity of this profound moment, our consciousness is transformed. The entity of self evaporates. All that is left is an infinity of interrelated nonpersonal phenomena, which are conditioned and ever-changing. Craving is extinguished and a great burden is lifted. There remains only an effortless flow, without a trace of resistance or tension. There remains only peace, and blessed nibbana, the uncreated, is realized.

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AFTERWORD

The Power of Loving Friendliness

THE TOOLS of mindfulness discussed in this book, if you choose to take advantage of them, can surely transform your every experience. In the afterword to the this new edition, I'd like to take some time to emphasize the importance of another aspect of the Buddha's path that goes hand in hand with mindfulness: *metta,* or loving friendliness. Without loving friendliness, our practice of mindfulness will never successfully break through our craving and rigid sense of self. Mindfulness, in turn, is a necessary basis for developing loving friendliness. The two are always developed together.

In the decade since this volume first appeared, much has happened in the world to increase people's feelings of insecurity and fear. In this troubled climate, the importance of cultivating a deep sense of loving friendliness is especially crucial for our well-being, and it is the best hope for the future of the world. The concern for others embodied in loving friendliness is at the heart of the promise of the Buddha—you can see it everywhere in his teachings and in the way he lived his life.

Each of us is born with the capacity for loving friendliness. Yet only in a calm mind, a mind free from anger, greed, and jealousy, can the seeds of loving friendliness develop; only from the fertile ground of a peaceful mind can loving friendliness flower. We must nurture

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the seeds of loving friendliness in ourselves and in others, help them take root and mature.

I travel all over the world teaching the Dhamma, and consequently I spend a lot of time in airports. One day I was in Gatwick airport near London waiting for a flight. I had quite a bit of time, but for me having time on my hands is not a problem. In fact, it is a pleasure, since it means more opportunity for meditation! So there I was, sitting cross-legged on one of the airport benches with my eyes closed, while all around me people were coming and going, rushing to and from their flights. When meditating in situations like this, I fill my mind with thoughts of loving friendliness and compassion for everyone everywhere. With every breath, with every pulse, with every heartbeat, I try to allow my entire being to become permeated with the glow of loving friendliness.

In that busy airport, absorbed in feelings of metta, I was paying no attention to the hustle and bustle around me, but soon I had the sensation that someone was sitting quite close to me on the bench. I didn't open my eyes but merely kept on with my meditation, radiating loving friendliness. Then I felt two tiny, tender hands reaching around my neck, and I slowly opened my eyes and discovered a very beautiful child, a little girl perhaps two years old. This little one, with bright blue eyes and a head covered in downy blond curls, had put her arms around me and was hugging me. I had seen this sweet child as I was people watching; she had had her hand grasped around her mother's little finger. Apparently, the little girl had loosened herself from her mother's hand and run over to me.

I looked over and saw that her mother had chased after her. Seeing her little girl with her arms around my neck, the mother asked me, "Please bless my little girl and let her go." I did not know what language the child spoke, but I said to her in English, "Please go. Your mother has lots of kisses for you, lots of hugs, lots of toys, and lots

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of sweets. I have none of those things. Please go." The child hung on to my neck and would not let go. Again, the mother folded her palms together and pleaded with me in a very kindly tone, "Please, sir, give her your blessing and let her go."

By this time, other people in the airport were beginning to notice. They must have thought that I knew this child, that perhaps she was related to me somehow. Surely they thought there was some strong bond between us. But I had never before that day seen this lovely little child. I did not even know what language she spoke. Again, I urged her, "Please go. You and your mother have a plane to catch. You are late. Your mother has all your toys and candy. I have nothing. Please go." But the little girl would not budge. She clung to me harder and harder. The mother then very gently took the little girl's hands off my neck and asked me to bless her. "You are a very good little girl," I said. "Your mother loves you very much. Hurry. You might miss your plane. Please go." But still the little girl would not go. She was crying and crying. Finally the mother carefully snatched her up. The toddler was kicking and screaming. She was trying to get loose and come back to me. But this time the mother managed to carry her off to the plane. The last I saw of her she was still struggling to get loose and run back to me.

Maybe because of my robes, this little girl thought I was a Santa Claus or some kind of fairytale figure. But there is another possibility: At the time I was sitting on that bench, I was practicing metta, sending out thoughts of loving friendliness with every breath. Perhaps this little child felt this; children are extremely sensitive in these ways, their psyches absorb whatever feelings are around them. When you are angry, they feel those vibrations; and when you are full of love and compassion, they feel that too. This little girl may have been drawn to me by the feelings of loving friendliness she felt. There was a bond between us—the bond of loving friendliness.

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The Four Sublime States

Loving friendliness works miracles. We have the capacity to act with loving friendliness. We may not even know we have this quality in ourselves, but the power of loving friendliness is inside us all. Loving friendliness is one of the four sublime states defined by the Buddha, along with compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. All four states are interrelated; we cannot develop one without the other.

One way to understand them is to think of different stages of parenthood. When a young woman finds out she is going to have a child, she feels a tremendous outpouring of love for the baby she will bear. She will do everything she can to protect the infant growing inside her. She will make every effort to make sure the baby is well and healthy. She is full of loving, hopeful thoughts for the child. Like metta, the feeling a new mother has for her infant is limitless and all-embracing; and, like metta, it does not depend on actions or behavior of the one receiving our thoughts of loving friendliness.

As the infant grows older and starts to explore his world, the parents develop compassion. Every time the child scrapes his knee, falls down, or bumps his head, the parent feels the child's pain. Some parents even say that when their child feels pain, it is as if they themselves were being hurt. There is no pity in this feeling; pity puts distance between others and ourselves. Compassion leads us to appropriate action; and the appropriate, compassionate action is just the pure, heartfelt hope that the pain stop and the child not suffer.

As time passes, the child heads off to school. Parents watch as the youngster makes friends, does well in school, sports, and other activities. Maybe the child does well on a spelling test, makes the baseball team, or gets elected class president. The parents are not jealous or resentful of their child's success but are full of happiness for the child. This is appreciative joy. Thinking of how we would feel

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for our own child, we can feel this for others. Even when we think of others whose success exceeds our own, we can appreciate their achievement and rejoice in their happiness.

To continue in our example: Eventually, after many years, the child grows up. He finishes school and goes out on his own; perhaps he marries and starts a family. Now it is time for the parents to practice equanimity. Clearly, what the parents feel for the child is not indifference. It is an appreciation that they have done all that they could do for the child. They recognize their limitations. Of course the parents continue caring for and respecting their child, but they do so with awareness that they no longer steer the outcome of their child's life. This is the practice of equanimity.

The ultimate goal of our practice of meditation is the cultivation of these four sublime states of loving friendliness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity.

The word *metta* comes from another Pali word, *mitra,* which means "friend." That is why I prefer to use the phrase "loving friendliness" as a translation of metta, rather than "loving kindness." The Sanskrit word *mitra* also refers to the sun at the center of our solar system that makes all life possible. Just as the sun's rays provide energy for all living things, the warmth and radiance of metta flows in the heart of all living beings.

The Seed Is in All of Us

Different objects reflect the sun's energy differently. Similarly, people differ in their ability to express loving friendliness. Some people seem naturally warmhearted, while others are more reserved and reluctant to open their hearts. Some people struggle to cultivate metta; others cultivate it without difficulty. But there is no one who is totally devoid of loving friendliness. We are all born with the instinct for

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metta. We can see it even in young babies who smile readily at the sight of another human face, any human face at all. Sadly, many people have no idea how much loving friendliness they have. Their innate capacity for loving friendliness may be buried under a heap of hatred, anger, and resentment accumulated through a lifetime—perhaps many lifetimes—of unwholesome thoughts and actions. But all of us can cultivate our heart, no matter what. We can nourish the seeds of loving friendliness until the force of loving friendliness blossoms in all our endeavors.

In the Buddha's time, there was a man named Angulimala; this man was, to use the language of today, a serial killer, a mass murderer. He was so wretched that he wore around his neck a garland of fingers taken from the people he had slaughtered, and he planned to make the Buddha his thousandth victim. In spite of Angulimala's reputation and his gruesome appearance, the Buddha nonetheless could see his capacity for loving friendliness. Thus, out of love and compassion—his own loving friendliness—the Buddha taught the Dhamma to this villainous murderer. As a result of the Buddha's teaching, Angulimala threw away his sword and surrendered to the Buddha, joining the followers of the Buddha and becoming ordained.

As it turned out, Angulimala started his vicious killing spree many years earlier because a man whom Angulimala regarded as his teacher had (for unwholesome reasons of his own) directed him to do so. Angulimala was not by nature a cruel person, nor was he an evil person. In fact, he had been a kind boy. In his heart, there was loving friendliness, gentleness, and compassion. As soon as he became a monk, his true nature was revealed, and not long after his ordination, he became enlightened.

The story of Angulimala shows us that sometimes people can appear very cruel and wicked, yet we must realize they are not that way by nature. Circumstances in their lives make them act in

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unwholesome ways. In Angulimala's case, he became a murderer because of his devotion to his teacher. For every one of us, not just violent criminals, there are countless causes and conditions—both wholesome and unwholesome—that make us act as we do.

In addition to the meditation offered earlier in this book, I'd like to offer another way to practice loving friendliness. Again, you start out in this meditation by banishing thoughts of self-hatred and condemnation. At the beginning of a meditation session, say the following sentences to yourself. And again, really feel the intention:

> *May my mind be filled with the thoughts of loving friendliness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. May I be generous. May I be gentle. May I be relaxed. May I be happy and peaceful. May I be healthy. May my heart become soft. May my words be pleasing to others. May my actions be kind.*
>
> *May all that I see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think help me to cultivate loving friendliness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. May all these experiences help me to cultivate thoughts of generosity and gentleness. May they all help me to relax. May they inspire friendly behavior. May these experiences be a source of peace and happiness. May they help me be free from fear, tension, anxiety, worry, and restlessness.*
>
> *No matter where I go in the world, in any direction, may I greet people with happiness, peace, and friendliness. May I be protected in all directions from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear.*

When we cultivate loving friendliness in ourselves, we learn to see that others have this kind, gentle nature—however well hidden

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it might be. Sometimes we have to dig very deep to find it, other times it might be nearer to the surface.

Seeing through the Dirt

The Buddha told the story of a monk who finds a filthy piece of cloth on the road. The rag is so nasty, at first the monk does not even want to touch it. He kicks it with his foot to knock off some of the dirt. Disgusted, he gingerly picks it up with two fingers, holding it away from himself with contempt. Yet even as the monk does this, he sees potential in that scrap of dirty cloth, and takes it home and washes it—over and over and over. Eventually, the wash water runs clean, and from underneath the filth and grime, a useful piece of material is revealed. The monk sees that if he collects enough pieces, he could, perhaps, make this rag into part of a robe.

Likewise, because of a person's nasty words, that person may seem totally worthless; it may be impossible to see that person's potential for loving friendliness. But this is where the practice of Skillful Effort comes in. Underneath such a person's rough exterior, you may find the warm, radiant jewel that is the person's true nature.

A person may use very harsh words for others, yet sometimes still act with compassion and kindness. In spite of her words, her deeds may be good. The Buddha compared this kind of person to a pond covered by moss. In order to use that water, you must brush the moss aside. Similarly, we sometimes need to ignore a person's superficial weaknesses to find her good heart.

But what if a person's words are cruel and her actions too are unkind? Is she rotten through and through? Even a person like this may have a pure heart. Imagine you have been walking through a desert. You have no water with you, and there is no water anywhere around. You are hot and tired. With every step, you become thirstier

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and thirstier. You are desperate for water. Then you come across a cow's footprint. There is water in the footprint, but not much because the footprint is not very deep. If you try to scoop up the water with your hand, it will become very muddy. You are so thirsty, you kneel down and bend over. Very slowly, you bring your mouth to the water and sip it, very carefully so as not to disturb the mud. Even though there is dirt all around, the little bit of water is still clear. You can quench your thirst. With similar effort, we can find a good heart even in a person who seems totally without redemption.

The meditation center where I most often teach is in the hills of the West Virginia countryside. When we first opened our center, there was a man down the road who was very unfriendly. I take a long walk every day, and, whenever I saw this man, I would wave to him. He would just frown at me and look away. Even so, I would always wave and think kindly of him, sending him metta. I was not phased by his attitude; I never gave up on him. Whenever I saw him, I waved. After about a year, his behavior changed. He stopped frowning. I felt wonderful. The practice of loving friendliness was beginning to bear fruit.

After another year, when I passed him on my walk, something miraculous happened. He drove past me and lifted one finger off the steering wheel. Again, I thought, "Oh, this is wonderful! Loving friendliness is working." And yet another year passed as, day after day, I would wave to him and wish him well. The third year, he lifted two fingers in my direction. Then the next year, he lifted all four fingers off the wheel. More time passed. I was walking down the road as he turned into his driveway. He took his hand completely off the steering wheel, stuck it out the window, and waved back to me.

One day, not long after that, I saw this man parked on the side of one of the forest roads. He was sitting in the driver's seat smoking a cigarette. I went over to him and we started talking. First we chatted

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just about the weather and then, little by little, his story unfolded: It turns out that, several years ago, he had been in a terrible accident—a tree had fallen on his truck. Almost every bone in his body had been broken, and he was left in a coma for some time. When I first started seeing him on the road, he was only beginning to recover. It was not because he was a mean person that he did not wave back to me; he did not wave back because he could not move all his fingers! Had I given up on him, I would never have known how good this man is. One day, when I had been away on a trip, he actually came by our center looking for me. He was worried because he hadn't seen me walking in a while. Now we are friends.

Practicing Loving Friendliness

The Buddha said, "By surveying the entire world with my mind, I have not come across anyone who loves others more than himself. Therefore one who loves himself should cultivate this loving friendliness." Cultivate loving friendliness toward yourself first, with the intention of sharing your kind thoughts with others. Develop this feeling. Be full of kindness toward yourself. Accept yourself just as you are. Make peace with your shortcomings. Embrace even your weaknesses. Be gentle and forgiving with yourself as you are at this very moment. If thoughts arise as to how you should be such and such a way, let them go. Establish fully the depth of these feelings of goodwill and kindness. Let the power of loving friendliness saturate your entire body and mind. Relax in its warmth and radiance. Expend this feeling to your loved ones, to people you don't know or feel neutrally about—and even to your adversaries!

> *Let each and every one of us imagine that our minds are free from greed, anger, aversion, jealousy, and fear. Let the thought*

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> *of loving friendliness embrace us and envelop us. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of our entire bodies and minds be charged with the thought of friendliness. Let us relax our bodies. Let us relax our minds. Let our minds and bodies be filled with the thought of loving friendliness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving friendliness pervade our entire being.*
>
> *May all beings in all directions, all around the universe, have good hearts. Let them be happy, let them have good fortune, let them be kind, let them have good and caring friends. May all beings everywhere be filled with the feeling of loving friendliness—abundant, exalted, and measureless. May they be free from enmity, free from affliction and anxiety. May they live happily.*

Just as we walk or run or swim to strengthen our bodies, the practice of loving friendliness on a regular basis strengthens our hearts. At first it may seem as if you are only going through the motions. But by associating with thoughts of metta over and over, it becomes a habit, a good habit. In time, your heart grows stronger, and the response of loving friendliness becomes automatic. As our hearts become stronger, even toward difficult people we can think kind and loving thoughts.

> *May my adversaries be well, happy, and peaceful. May no harm come to them, may no difficulty come to them, may no pain come to them. May they always meet with success.*

"Success?" some people ask. "How can we wish our adversaries success? What if they're trying to kill me?" When we wish success for our adversaries, we don't mean worldly success or success in

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doing something immoral or unethical; we mean success in the spiritual realm. Our adversaries are clearly not successful spiritually; if they were successful spiritually, they would not be acting in a way that causes us harm.

Whenever we say of our adversaries, "May they be successful," we mean: "May my enemies be free from anger, greed, and jealousy. May they have peace, comfort, and happiness." Why is somebody cruel or unkind? Perhaps that person was brought up under unfortunate circumstances. Perhaps there are situations in that person's life we don't know about that cause him or her to act cruelly. The Buddha asked us to think of such people the same way we would if someone were suffering from a terrible illness. Do we get angry or upset with people who are ill? Or do we have sympathy and compassion for them? Perhaps even more than our loved ones, our adversaries deserve our kindness, for their suffering is so much greater. For these reasons, without any reservation, we should cultivate kind thoughts about them. We include them in our hearts just as we would those dearest to us.

> *May all those who have harmed us be free from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear. Let these thoughts of loving friendliness embrace them, envelop them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with thoughts of friendliness. Let them relax their bodies. Let them relax their minds. Let the peace and tranquillity pervade their entire being.*

Practicing loving friendliness can change our habitual negative thought patterns and reinforce positive ones. When we practice metta meditation, our minds will become filled with peace and happiness. We will be relaxed. We gain concentration. When our mind

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becomes calm and peaceful, our hatred, anger, and resentment fade away. But loving friendliness is not limited to our thoughts. We must manifest it in our words and our actions. We cannot cultivate loving friendliness in isolation from the world.

You can start by thinking kind thoughts about everyone you have contact with every day. If you have mindfulness, you can do this every waking minute with everyone you deal with. Whenever you see someone, consider that, like yourself, that person wants happiness and wants to avoid suffering. We all feel that way. All beings feel that way. Even the tiniest insect recoils from harm. When we recognize that common ground, we see how closely we are all connected. The woman behind the checkout counter, the man who passes you on the expressway, the young couple walking across the street, the old man in the park feeding the birds. Whenever you see another being, any being, keep this in mind. Wish for them happiness, peace, and well-being. It is a practice that can change your life and the lives of those around you.

At first, you may experience resistance to this practice. Perhaps the practice seems forced. Perhaps you feel unable to bring yourself to feel these kinds of thoughts. Because of experiences in your own life, it may be easier to feel loving friendliness for some people and more difficult for others. Children, for example, often bring out our feelings of loving friendliness quite naturally; while with others, it may be more difficult. Watch the habits in your mind. Learn to recognize your negative emotions and start to break them down. With mindfulness, little by little you can change your responses.

Does sending someone thoughts of loving friendliness actually change the other person? Can practicing loving friendliness change the world? When you are sending loving friendliness to people who are far away or people you may not even know, of course, it is not possible to know the effect. But you can notice the effect that practicing

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loving friendliness has on your own peace of mind. What is important is the sincerity of your own wish for the happiness of others. Truly, the effect is immediate. The only way to find this out for yourself is to try it.

Practicing metta does not mean that we ignore the unwholesome actions of others. It simply means that we respond to such actions in an appropriate way. There was a prince named Abharaja Kumara. One day he went to the Buddha and asked whether the Buddha was ever harsh to others. At this time the prince had his little child on his lap. "Suppose, Prince, this little child of yours were to put a piece of wood in his mouth, what would you do?" asked the Buddha. "If he put a piece of wood in his mouth, I would hold the child very tightly between my legs and put my crooked index finger in his mouth. Though he might be crying and struggling in discomfort, I would pull the piece of wood out even if he bleeds," said the prince.

"Why would you do that?"

"Because I love my child. I want to save his life," was his reply.

"Similarly, Prince, sometimes I have to be harsh on my disciples not out of cruelty, but out of love for them," said the Buddha. Loving friendliness, not anger, motivated his actions.

The Buddha provided us with five very basic tools for dealing with others in a kindhearted way. These tools are the five precepts. Some people think of morality as restrictions on freedom, but in fact, these precepts liberate us. They free us from the suffering we cause ourselves and others when we act unkindly. These guidelines train us to protect others from harm; and, by protecting others, we protect ourselves. The precepts caution us to abstain from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from speaking falsely or harshly, and from using intoxicants that cause us to act in an unmindful way.

Developing mindfulness through the practice of meditation also helps us relate to others with loving friendliness. On the cushion, we

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watch our minds as liking and disliking arise. We teach ourselves to relax our mind when such thoughts arise. We learn to see attachment and aversion as momentary states, and we learn to let them go. Meditation helps us look at the world in a new light and gives us a way out. The deeper we go in our practice, the more skills we develop.

Dealing with Anger

When we are angry with someone, we often latch on to one particular aspect of that person. Usually it's only a moment or two, enough for a few harsh words, a certain look, a thoughtless action. In our minds, the rest of that person drops away. All that is left is the part that pushed our buttons. When we do this, we are isolating one miniscule fraction of the whole person as something real and solid. We are not seeing all the factors and forces that shaped that person. We focus on only one aspect of that person—the part that made us angry.

Over the years, I have received many letters from prisoners who are seeking to learn the Dhamma. Some have done terrible things, even murder. And yet they see things differently now and want to change their lives. There was one letter that was particularly insightful and deeply touched my heart. In it, the writer described how the other inmates shouted and jeered whenever the guard appeared. The inmate tried to explain to the others that this guard was also a human being, but the others were blinded by hatred. All they could see, he said, was the uniform, not the man inside it.

When we are angry with someone, we can ask ourselves, "Am I angry at the hair on that person's head? Am I angry at his skin? His teeth? His brain? His heart? His sense of humor? His tenderness? His generosity? His smile?" When we take the time to consider all the many elements and processes that make up a person, our anger

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naturally softens. Through the practice of mindfulness, we learn to see both ourselves and others more clearly. Understanding helps us to relate to others with loving friendliness. Within each of us is a core of goodness. In some, as in the case of Angulimala, we cannot see this true nature. Understanding the concept of "no-self" softens our heart and helps us forgive the unkind actions of others. We learn to relate to ourselves and others with loving friendliness.

But, what if someone hurts you? What if someone insults you? You may want to retaliate—which is a very human response. But, where does that lead? "Hatred is never appeased by more hatred," it says in the *Dhammapada*. An angry response only leads to more anger. If you respond to anger with loving friendliness, the other person's anger will not increase. Slowly it may fade away. "By love alone is anger appeased," continues the verse in the *Dhammapada*.

An enemy of the Buddha named Devadatta concocted a scheme to kill the Buddha. Having enraged an elephant with alcohol, Devadatta let him loose at a time and a place Devadatta knew the Buddha would be. Everyone on the road ran away. Everyone who saw the Buddha warned him to run away. But the Buddha kept on walking. His devoted companion, the Venerable Ananda, thought he could stop the elephant. When Ananda stepped in front of the Buddha to try to protect him, the Buddha asked him to step aside; Ananda's physical strength alone surely could not stop this elephant.

When the elephant reached the Buddha, his head was raised, his ears were upright and his trunk was lifted in a mad fury. The Buddha simply stood in front of him and radiated loving, compassionate thoughts toward the animal—and the elephant stopped in his tracks. The Buddha gently raised his hand up with his palm toward the beast, sending him waves of loving friendliness. The elephant knelt down before him, gentle as a lamb. With the power of loving friendliness alone, the Buddha had subdued the raging animal.

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The response of anger to anger is a conditioned response; it is learned rather than innate. If we have been trained from childhood to be patient, kind, and gentle, then loving friendliness becomes part of our life. It becomes a habit. Otherwise anger becomes our habit. But even as adults, we can change our habitual responses. We can train ourselves to react in a different way.

There is another story from the Buddha's life that teaches us how to respond to insults and harsh words. The Buddha's rivals had bribed a prostitute named Cinca to insult and humiliate the Buddha. Cinca tied a bunch of sticks to her belly underneath her rough clothes in order to look like she was pregnant. While the Buddha was delivering a sermon to hundreds of people, she came right out in front of him and said, "You rogue. You pretend to be a saint preaching to all these people. But look what you have done to me! I am pregnant because of you." Calmly, the Buddha spoke to her, without anger, without hatred. With his voice full of loving friendliness and compassion, he said to her, "Sister, you and I are the only ones who know what has happened." Cinca was taken aback by the Buddha's response. She was so shocked that on the way back she stumbled. The strings that were holding the bundle of sticks to her belly came loose. All the sticks fell to the ground, and everyone realized her ruse. Several people in the audience wanted to beat her, but the Buddha stopped them. "No, no. That is not the way you should treat her. We should help her understand the Dhamma. That is a much more effective punishment." After the Buddha taught her the Dhamma, her entire personality changed. She too became gentle, kind, and compassionate.

When someone tries to make you angry or does something to hurt you, stay with your thoughts of loving friendliness toward that person. A person filled with thoughts of loving friendliness, the Buddha said, is like the earth. Someone may try to make the earth disappear by

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digging at it with a hoe or an ax, but that is a futile act. No amount of digging—not in one lifetime or many lifetimes—makes the earth vanish. The earth remains, unaffected, undiminished. Like the earth, a person full of loving friendliness is untouched by anger.

In another story from the Buddha's life, there was a man named Akkosina, whose name means "not getting angry." But in fact, this man was exactly the opposite: he was always getting angry. When he heard that the Buddha never got angry with anyone, he decided to visit him. He went up to the Buddha and scolded him for all sorts of things, insulting him and calling him awful names. At the end of his tirade, the Buddha asked this man if he had any friends and relatives. "Yes," he replied. "When you visit them, do you take them gifts?" "Of course," said the man. "I always bring them gifts." "What happens if they don't accept your gifts," the Buddha asked. "Well, I just take them home and enjoy them with my own family." "And likewise," said the Buddha, "You have brought me a gift today that I don't accept. You may take that gift home to your family." With patience, wit, and loving friendliness, the Buddha invites us to change how we think about the "gift" of angry words.

If we respond to insults or angry words with mindfulness and loving friendliness, we are able to look closely at the whole situation. Perhaps that person did not know what he or she was saying. Perhaps the words were not meant to harm you. It may have been totally innocent or inadvertent. Perhaps it was your frame of mind at the time the words were spoken. Perhaps you did not hear the words clearly or misunderstood the context. It is also important to consider carefully what that person is saying. If you respond with anger, you will not hear the message behind the words. Perhaps that person is pointing out something you need to hear.

We all encounter people who push our buttons. Without mindfulness and loving friendliness, we respond automatically with anger

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or resentment. With mindfulness, we can watch how our mind responds to certain words and actions. Just as we do on the cushion, we can watch the arising of attachment and aversion. Mindfulness is like a safety net that cushions us against unwholesome actions. Mindfulness gives us time; time gives us choices. We don't have to be swept away by our feelings. We can respond with wisdom rather than delusion.

Universal Loving Friendliness

Loving friendliness is not something we do sitting on a cushion in one place, thinking and thinking and thinking. We must let the power of loving friendliness shine through every encounter with others. Loving friendliness is the underlying principle behind all wholesome thoughts, words, and deeds. With loving friendliness, we recognize more clearly the needs of others and help them readily. With thoughts of loving friendliness we appreciate the success of others with warm feeling. We need loving friendliness in order to live and work with others in harmony. Loving friendliness protects us from the suffering caused by anger and jealousy. When we cultivate our loving friendliness, our compassion, our appreciative joy for others, and our equanimity, we not only make life more pleasant for those around us, our own lives become peaceful and happy. The power of loving friendliness, like the radiance of the sun, is beyond measure.

> *May all those who are imprisoned legally or illegally, all who are in police custody anywhere in the world meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from greed, anger, aversion, hatred, jealousy, and fear. Let their bodies and minds be filled with thoughts of loving friendliness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving friendliness pervade their entire bodies and minds.*

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May all who are in hospitals suffering from numerous sicknesses meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, disappointment, anxiety, and fear. Let these thoughts of loving friendliness embrace all of them, envelop them. Let their minds and bodies be filled with the thought of loving friendliness.

May all mothers who are in pain delivering babies meet with peace and happiness. Let every drop of blood, every cell, every atom, every molecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with these thoughts of friendliness.

May all single parents taking care of their children meet with peace and happiness. May they have the patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome the inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May they be well, happy, and peaceful.

May all children abused by adults in numerous ways meet with peace and happiness. May they be filled with thoughts of loving friendliness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity. May they be gentle. May they be relaxed. May their hearts become soft. May their words be pleasing to others. May they be free from fear, tension, anxiety, worry, and restlessness.

May all rulers be gentle, kind, generous, and compassionate. May they have understanding of the oppressed, the underprivileged, the discriminated against, and the poverty-stricken. May their hearts melt at the suffering of their unfortunate citizens. Let these thoughts of loving friendliness embrace them, envelop them. Let every cell, every drop of blood, every atom, every mol-

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> *ecule of their entire bodies and minds be charged with thoughts of friendliness. Let the peace and tranquillity of loving friendliness pervade their entire being.*
>
> *May the oppressed and underprivileged, the poverty-stricken and those discriminated against, meet with peace and happiness. May they be free from pain, afflictions, depression, disappointment, anxiety, and fear. May all of them in all directions, all around the universe, be well, happy, and at peace. May they have the patience, courage, understanding, and determination to meet and overcome the inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. May these thoughts of loving friendliness embrace all of them, envelop them. May their minds and bodies be filled with thoughts of loving friendliness.*
>
> *May all beings everywhere of every shape and form, with two legs, four legs, many legs, or no legs, born or coming to birth, in this realm or the next, have happy minds. May no one deceive another nor despise anyone anywhere. May no one wish harm to another. Toward all living beings, may I cultivate a boundless heart, above, below, and all around, unobstructed without hatred or resentment. May all beings be released from suffering and attain perfect peace.*

Loving friendliness goes beyond all boundaries of religion, culture, geography, language, and nationality. It is a universal and ancient law that binds all of us together—no matter what form we may take. Loving friendliness should be practiced unconditionally. My enemy's pain is my pain. His anger is my anger. His loving friendliness is my loving friendliness. If he is happy, I am happy. If he is peaceful, I am peaceful. If he is healthy, I am healthy. Just as we all

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share suffering regardless of our differences, we should all share our loving friendliness with every person everywhere. No one nation can stand alone without the help and support of other nations, nor can any one person exist in isolation. To survive, we need other living beings, beings who are bound to be different from us. That is simply the way things are. Because of the differences we have, the practice of loving friendliness is absolutely necessary. It is what ties all of us together.

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APPENDIX:

The Context of the Tradition

The subject of this book is vipassana meditation practice. Repeat, practice. This is a meditation manual, a nuts-and-bolts, step-by-step guide to insight meditation. It is meant to be practical. It is meant for use.

There are many styles of meditation. Every major religious tradition has some sort of procedure that they call meditation, and the word is often very loosely used. Please understand that this volume deals exclusively with the *vipassana* style of meditation, as taught and practiced in South and Southeast Asian Buddhism. Vipassana is a Pali-language term often translated as "insight" meditation, since the purpose of this system is to give the meditator insight into the nature of reality and accurate understanding of how everything works.

Buddhism as a whole is quite different from the theological religions with which Westerners are most familiar. It is a direct entrance to a spiritual or divine realm, without assistance from deities or other "agents." Its flavor is intensely clinical, much more akin to what we might call psychology than to what we would usually call religion. Buddhist practice is an ongoing investigation of reality, a microscopic examination of the very process of perception. Its intention is to pick apart the screen of lies and delusions through which we normally view the world, and thus to reveal the face of ultimate reality. Vipassana meditation is an ancient and elegant technique for doing just that.

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Theravada (pronounced “terra vada”) Buddhism presents us with an effective system for exploring the deeper levels of the mind, down to the very root of consciousness itself. It also offers a considerable system of reverence and rituals, in which those techniques are contained. This beautiful tradition is the natural result of its 2,500-year development within the highly traditional cultures of South and Southeast Asia.

In this volume, we make every effort to separate the ornamental from the fundamental and to present only the plain truth. Those readers who are of a ritual bent may investigate the Theravada practice in other books, and will find there a vast wealth of customs and ceremony, a rich tradition full of beauty and significance. Those of a more pragmatic bent may use just the techniques themselves, applying them within whatever philosophical and emotional context they wish. The practice is the thing.

The distinction between vipassana meditation and other styles of meditation is crucial, and needs to be fully understood. Buddhism addresses two major types of meditation; they are different mental skills or modes of functioning, different qualities of consciousness. In Pali, the original language of Theravada literature, they are called *vipassana* and *samatha*.

Vipassana can be translated as “insight,” a clear awareness of exactly what is happening as it happens. *Samatha* can be translated as “concentration” or “tranquillity,” and is a state in which the mind is focused only on one item, brought to rest, and not allowed to wander. When this is done, a deep calm pervades body and mind, a state of tranquillity that must be experienced to be understood. Most systems of meditation emphasize the samatha component. The meditator focuses his or her mind on a certain item, such as a prayer, a chant, a candle flame, or a religious image, and excludes all other thoughts and perceptions from his or her consciousness. The result

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is a state of rapture, which lasts until the meditator ends the session of sitting. It is beautiful, delightful, meaningful, and alluring, but only temporary.

Vipassana meditation addresses the other component: insight. The vipassana meditator uses concentration as a tool by which his or her awareness can chip away at the wall of illusion that blocks the living light of reality. It is a gradual process of ever-increasing awareness into the inner workings of reality itself. It takes years, but one day the meditator chisels through that wall and tumbles into the presence of light. The transformation is complete. It's called liberation, and it's permanent. Liberation is the goal of all Buddhist systems of practice. But the routes to the attainment of that end are quite diverse.

There are an enormous number of distinct sects within Buddhism. They divide into two broad streams of thought: Mahayana and Theravada. Mahayana Buddhism prevails throughout East Asia, shaping the cultures of China, Korea, Japan, Nepal, Tibet, and Vietnam. The most widely known of the Mahayana systems is Zen, practiced mainly in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and the United States. The Theravada system of practice prevails in South and Southeast Asia in the countries of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. This book deals with Theravada practice.

Traditional Theravada literature describes the techniques of both samatha (concentration) and vipassana (insight) meditation. There are forty different subjects of meditation described in the Pali literature. They are recommended as objects of concentration and subjects of investigation leading to insight. But this is a basic manual, and we will limit our discussion to the most fundamental of those recommended objects: breathing. This book is an introduction to the attainment of mindfulness through bare attention to, and clear comprehension of, the whole process of breathing. Using the breath as the primary focus of attention, the meditator applies participatory

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observation to the entirety of his or her own perceptual universe. The meditator learns to watch changes occurring in all physical experiences, feelings, and perceptions, and learns to study his or her own mental activities and the fluctuations in the character of consciousness itself. All of these changes are occurring perpetually and are present in every moment of our experiences.

Meditation is a living activity, an inherently experiential activity. It cannot be taught as a purely scholastic subject. The living heart of the process must come from the teacher's own personal experience. Nevertheless, there is a vast fund of codified material on the subject, produced by some of the most intelligent and deeply illumined human beings ever to walk the earth. This literature is worthy of attention. Most of the points given in this book are drawn from the Tipitaka, which is the three-section compendium of the Buddha's original teachings. The Tipitaka is comprised of the Vinaya, the code of discipline for monks, nuns, and lay people; the Suttas, public discourses attributed to the Buddha; and the Abhidhamma, a set of deep psycho-philosophical teachings.

In the first century C.E., an eminent Buddhist scholar named Upatissa wrote the *Vimuttimagga (The Path of Freedom),* in which he summarized the Buddha's teachings on meditation. In the fifth century C.E., another great Buddhist scholar, named Buddhaghosa, covered the same ground in a second scholastic thesis, the *Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification),* which remains the standard text on meditation today.

This book offers you a foot in the door. It's up to you to take the first few steps on the road to the discovery of who you are and what it all means. It is a journey worth taking.

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About the Author

Bhante Henepola Gunaratana was ordained at the age of twelve as a Buddhist monk in Malandeniya, Sri Lanka. In 1947, at age twenty, he was given higher ordination in Kandy. He received his education from Vidyasekhara Junior College in Gumpaha, Vidyalankara College in Kelaniya, and Buddhist Missionary College in Colombo. Subsequently he traveled to India for five years of missionary work for the Mahabodhi Society, serving the Harijana ("untouchable") people in Sanchi, Delhi, and Bombay. Later he spent ten years as a missionary in Malaysia, serving as religious advisor to the Sasana Abhivurdhiwardhana Society, the Buddhist Missionary Society, and the Buddhist Youth Federation of Malaysia. He has been a teacher in Kishon Dial School and Temple Road Girls' School and principal of the Buddhist Institute of Kuala Lumpur.

At the invitation of the Sasana Sevaka Society, he came to the United States in 1968 to serve as general secretary of the Buddhist Vihara Society of Washington, D.C. In 1980, he was appointed president of the society. During his years at the Vihara, from 1968 to 1988, he taught courses in Buddhism, conducted meditation retreats, and lectured widely throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, and Asia. In addition, from 1973 to 1988, Venerable Gunaratana served as Buddhist chaplain at American University.

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Since 1982 Bhante Gunaratana has been president of the Bhavana Society, a monastery and retreat center located in the woods of West Virginia (near the Shenandoah Valley), which he cofounded with Matthew Flickstein. Bhante Gunaratana resides at the Bhavana Society, where he ordains and trains monks and nuns, and offers retreats to the general public. He also travels frequently to lecture and lead retreats throughout the world.

In 2000, Bhante Gunaratana received an award for lifetime outstanding achievement from his alma mater, Vidyalankara College. Bhante Gunaratana is also the author of *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*, *Beyond Mindfulness in Plain English*, and the memoir *Journey to Mindfulness*.

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The Jhanas in Theravada Buddhist Meditation

by

Henepola Gunaratana

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Abbreviations

PTS = Pali Text Society edition
BBS = Burmese Buddhasasana Samiti edition

A. .... Anguttara Nikaya (PTS)
D. .... Digha Nikaya (PTS)
Dhs. .... Dhammasangani (BBS)
Dhs.A. .... Dhammasangani Atthakatha = Atthasalini (BBS)
M. .... Majjhima Nikaya (PTS)
M.A. .... Majjhima Nikaya Atthakatha (BBS)
Miln. .... Milindapanha (PTS)
PP. .... Path of Purification (translation of *Visuddhimagga,* by Bhikkhu Ñanamoli; Kandy: BPS, 1975)
S. .... Samyutta Nikaya (PTS)
SA. .... Samyutta Nikaya Atthakatha (BBS)
ST. .... Samyutta Nikaya Tika (BBS)
Vbh. .... Vibhanga (PTS)
Vin.A. .... Vinaya Atthakatha (BBS)
Vism. .... Visuddhimagga (PTS)
Vism.T. .... Visuddhimagga Tika (BBS)

1. Introduction

The Doctrinal Context of Jhana

The Buddha says that just as in the great ocean there is but one taste, the taste of salt, so in his doctrine and discipline there is but one taste, the taste of freedom. The taste of freedom that pervades the Buddha's teaching is the taste of spiritual freedom, which from the Buddhist perspective means freedom from suffering. In the process leading to deliverance from suffering, meditation is the means of generating the inner awakening required for liberation. The methods of meditation taught in the Theravada Buddhist tradition are based on the Buddha's own experience, forged by him in the course of his own quest for enlightenment. They are designed to re-create in the disciple who practices them the same essential enlightenment that the Buddha himself attained when he sat beneath the Bodhi tree, the awakening to the Four Noble Truths.

The various subjects and methods of meditation expounded in the Theravada Buddhist scriptures — the Pali canon and its commentaries — divide into two inter-related systems. One is called the development of serenity *(samathabhavana),* the other the development of insight *(vipassanabhavana).* The former also goes under the name of development of concentration *(samadhibhavana),* the latter the development of wisdom *(paññabhavana).*The practice of serenity meditation aims at developing a calm, concentrated, unified mind as a means of experiencing inner peace and as a basis for wisdom. The practice of insight meditation aims at gaining a direct understanding of the real nature of phenomena. Of the two, the development of insight is regarded by Buddhism as the essential key to liberation, the direct antidote to the ignorance underlying bondage and suffering. Whereas serenity meditation is recognized as common to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist contemplative disciplines, insight meditation is held to be the unique discovery of the Buddha and an unparalleled feature of his path. However, because the growth of insight presupposes a certain degree of concentration, and serenity meditation helps to achieve this, the development of serenity also claims an incontestable place in the Buddhist meditative process. Together the two types of meditation work to make the mind a fit instrument for enlightenment. With his mind unified by means of the development of serenity, made sharp and bright by the development of insight, the meditator can proceed unobstructed to reach the end of suffering, Nibbana.

Pivotal to both systems of meditation, though belonging inherently to the side of serenity, is a set of meditative attainments called the *jhanas.* Though translators have offered various renderings of this word, ranging from the feeble "musing" to the misleading "trance" and the ambiguous "meditation," we prefer to leave the word untranslated and to let its meaning emerge from its contextual usages. From these it is clear that the jhanas are states of deep mental unification which result from the centering of the mind upon a single object with such power of attention that a total immersion in the object takes place. The early suttas speak of four jhanas, named simply after their numerical position in the series: the first jhana, the second jhana, the third jhana and the forth jhana. In the suttas the four repeatedly appear each described by a standard formula which we will examine later in detail.

The importance of the jhanas in the Buddhist path can readily be gauged from the frequency with which they are mentioned throughout the suttas. The jhanas figure prominently both in the Buddha's own experience and in his exhortation to disciples. In his childhood, while attending an annual plowing festival, the future Buddha spontaneously entered the first jhana. It was the memory of this childhood incident, many years later after his futile pursuit of austerities, that revealed to him the way to enlightenment during his period of deepest despondency (M.i, 246-47). After taking his seat beneath the Bodhi tree, the Buddha entered the four jhanas immediately before direction his mind to the threefold knowledge that issued in his enlightenment (M.i.247-49). Throughout his active career the four jhanas remained "his heavenly dwelling" (D.iii,220) to which he resorted in order to live happily here and now. His understanding of the corruption, purification and emergence in the jhanas and other meditative attainments is one of the Tathagata's ten powers which enable him to turn the matchless wheel of the Dhamma (M.i,70). Just before his passing away the Buddha entered the jhanas in direct and reverse order, and the passing away itself took place directly from the fourth jhana (D.ii,156).

The Buddha is constantly seen in the suttas encouraging his disciples to develop jhana. The four jhanas are invariably included in the complete course of training laid down for disciples.[1] They figure in the training as the discipline of higher consciousness *(adhicittasikkha),* right concentration *(sammasamadhi)* of the Noble Eightfold Path, and the faculty and power of concentration *(samadhindriya, samadhibala).* Though a vehicle of dry insight can be found, indications are that this path is not an easy one, lacking the aid of the powerful serenity available to the practitioner of jhana. The way of the jhana attainer seems by comparison smoother and more pleasurable (A.ii,150-52). The Buddha even refers to the four jhanas figuratively as a kind of Nibbana: he calls them immediately visible Nibbana, factorial Nibbana, Nibbana here and now (A.iv,453-54).

To attain the jhanas, the meditator must begin by eliminating the unwholesome mental states obstructing inner collectedness, generally grouped together as the *five hindrances(pañcanivarana):* sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry and doubt.[2] The mind's absorption on its object is brought about by five opposing mental states — applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness and one

pointedness[3]— called the *jhana factors (jhanangani)* because they lift the mind to the level of the first jhana and remain there as its defining components.
After reaching the first jhana the ardent meditator can go on to reach the higher jhanas, which is done by eliminating the coarser factors in each jhana. Beyond the four jhanas lies another fourfold set of higher meditative states which deepen still further the element of serenity. These attainments *(aruppa),* are the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.[4] In the Pali commentaries these come to be called the *four immaterial jhanas (arupajhana),* the four preceding states being renamed for the sake of clarity, the *four fine-material jhanas (rupajhana).* Often the two sets are joined together under the collective title of the eight jhanas or the eight attainments *(atthasamapattiyo).*

The four jhanas and the four immaterial attainments appear initially as mundane states of deep serenity pertaining to the preliminary stage of the Buddhist path, and on this level they help provide the base of concentration needed for wisdom to arise. But the four jhanas again reappear in a later stage in the development of the path, in direct association with liberating wisdom, and they are then designated the *supramundane (lokuttara) jhanas.* These supramundane jhanas are the levels of concentration pertaining to the four degrees of enlightenment experience called the supramundane paths *(magga)*and the stages of liberation resulting from them, the four fruits *(phala).*

Finally, even after full liberation is achieved, the mundane jhanas can still remain as attainments available to the fully liberated person, part of his untrammeled contemplative experience.

Etymology of Jhana

The great Buddhist commentator Buddhaghosa traces the Pali word "jhana" (Skt. *dhyana)*to two verbal forms. One, the etymologically correct derivation, is the verb *jhayati,*meaning to think or meditate; the other is a more playful derivation, intended to illuminate its function rather than its verbal source, from the verb *jhapeti* meaning to burn up. He explains: "It burns up opposing states, thus it is jhana" (Vin.A. i, 116), the purport being that jhana "burns up" or destroys the mental defilements preventing the developing the development of serenity and insight.

In the same passage Buddhaghosa says that jhana has the characteristic mark of contemplation *(upanijjhana).* Contemplation, he states, is twofold: the contemplation of the object and the contemplation of the characteristics of phenomena. The former is exercised by the eight attainments of serenity together with their access, since these contemplate the object used as the basis for developing concentration; for this reason these attainments are given the name "jhana" in the mainstream of Pali meditative exposition. However, Buddhaghosa also allows that the term "jhana" can be extended loosely to insight *(vipassana),* the paths and the fruits on the ground that these perform the work of contemplating the characteristics of things the three marks of impermanence, suffering and non-self in the case of insight, Nibbana in the case of the paths and fruits.

In brief the twofold meaning of jhana as "contemplation" and "burning up" can be brought into connection with the meditative process as follows. By fixing his mind on the object the meditator reduces and eliminates the lower mental qualities such as the five hindrances and promotes the growth of the higher qualities such as the jhana factors, which lead the mind to complete absorption in the object. Then by contemplating the characteristics of phenomena with insight, the meditator eventually reaches the supramundane jhana of the four paths, and with this jhana he burns up the defilements and attains the liberating experience of the fruits.

Jhana and Samadhi

In the vocabulary of Buddhist meditation the word "jhana" is closely connected with another word, *"samadhi"* generally rendered by "concentration." *Samadhi* derives from the prefixed verbal root *sam-a-dha*, meaning to collect or to bring together, thus suggesting the concentration or unification of the mind. The word *"samadhi"* is almost interchangeable with the word *"samatha,"* serenity, though the latter comes from a different root, *sam,* meaning to become calm.

In the suttas *samadhi* is defined as mental one-pointedness, *(cittass'ekaggata* M.i,301) and this definition is followed through rigorously in the Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma treats one-pointedness as a distinct mental factor present in every state of consciousness, exercising the function of unifying the mind on its object. From this strict psychological standpoint *samadhi* can be present in unwholesome states of consciousness as well as in wholesome an neutral states. In its unwholesome forms it is called "wrong concentration" *(micchasamadhi)*, In its wholesome forms "right concentration" *(sammasamadhi).*

In expositions on the practice of meditation, however, *samadhi* is limited to one-pointedness of mind (Vism.84-85; PP.84-85), and even here we can understand from the context that the word means only the wholesome one-pointedness involved in the deliberate transmutation of the mind to a heightened level of calm. Thus Buddhaghosa explains *samadhi* etymologically as "the centering of consciousness and consciousness concomitants evenly and rightly on a single object... the state in virtue of which consciousness and its concomitants remain evenly and rightly on a single object, undistracted and unscattered" (Vism.84-85; PP.85).

However, despite the commentator's bid for consistency, the word *samadhi* is used in the Pali literature on meditation with varying degrees of specificity of meaning. In the narrowest sense, as defined by Buddhaghosa, it denotes the particular mental factor responsible for the concentrating of the mind, namely, one-pointedness. In a wider sense it can signify the states of unified consciousness that result from the strengthening of concentration, i.e., the meditative attainments of serenity and the stages leading up to them. And in a still wider sense the word *samadhi* can be applied to the method of practice used to produce and cultivate these refined states of concentration, here being equivalent to the development of serenity.

It is in the second sense that *samadhi* and jhana come closest in meaning. The Buddha explains right concentration as the four jhanas (D.ii,313), and in doing so allows concentration to encompass the meditative attainments signified by the jhanas. However, even though jhana and *samadhi* can overlap in denotation, certain differences in their suggested and contextual meanings prevent unqualified identification of the two terms. First behind the Buddha's use of the jhana formula to explain right concentration lies a more technical understanding of the terms. According to this understanding *samadhi* can be narrowed down in range to signify only one mental factor, the most prominent in the jhana, namely, one-pointedness, while the word "jhana" itself must be seen as encompassing the state of consciousness in its entirety, or at least the whole group of mental factors individuating that meditative state as a jhana.

In the second place, when *samadhi* is considered in its broader meaning it involves a wider range of reference than jhana. The Pali exegetical tradition recognizes three levels of *samadhi*: preliminary concentration *(parikammasamadhi),* which is produced as a result of the meditator's initial efforts to focus his mind on his meditation subject; access concentration *(upacarasamadhi),* marked by the suppression of the five hindrances, the manifestation of the jhana factors, and the appearance of a luminous mental replica of the meditation object called the counterpart sign *(patibhaganimitta);* and absorption concentration *(appanasamadhi),* the complete immersion of the mind in its object effected by the full maturation of the jhana factors.[5] Absorption concentration comprises the eight attainments, the four immaterial attainments, and to this extent jhana and *samadhi*coincide. However, *samadhi* still has a broader scope than jhana, since it includes not only the jhanas themselves but also the two preparatory degrees of concentration leading up to them. Further, *samadhi* also covers a still different type of concentration called momentary concentration *(khanikasamadhi),* the mobile mental stabilization produced in the course of insight contemplation of the passing flow of phenomena.

2. The Preparation for Jhana

The jhanas do not arise out of a void but in dependence on the right conditions. They come to growth only when provided with the nutriments conductive to their development. Therefore, prior to beginning meditation, the aspirant to the jhanas must prepare a groundwork for his practice by fulfilling certain preliminary requirements. He first must endeavor to purify his moral virtue, sever the outer impediments to practice, and place himself under a qualified teacher who will assign him a suitable meditation subject and explain to him the methods of developing it. After learning these the disciple must then seek out a congenial dwelling and diligently strive for success. In this chapter we will examine in order each of the preparatory steps that have to be fulfilled before commencing to develop jhana.

The Moral Foundation for Jhana

A disciple aspiring to the jhanas first has to lay a solid foundation of moral discipline. Moral purity is indispensable to meditative progress for several deeply psychological reasons. It is needed first, in order to safeguard against the danger of remorse, the nagging sense of guilt that arises when the basic principles of morality are ignored or deliberately violated. Scrupulous conformity to virtuous rules of conduct protects the meditator from this danger disruptive to inner calm, and brings joy and happiness when the meditator reflects upon the purity of his conduct (see A.v,1-7).

A second reason a moral foundation is needed for meditation follows from an understanding of the purpose of concentration. Concentration, in the Buddhist discipline, aims at providing a base for wisdom by cleansing the mind of the dispersive influence of the defilements. But in order for the concentration exercises to effectively combat the defilements, the coarser expressions of the latter through bodily and verbal action first have to be checked. Moral transgressions being invariably motivated by defilements — by greed, hatred and delusion — when a person acts in violation of the precepts of morality he excites and reinforces the very same mental factors his practice of meditation is intended to eliminate. This involves him in a crossfire of incompatible aims which renders his attempts at mental purification ineffective. The only way he can avoid frustration in his endeavor to purify the mind of its subtler defilements is to prevent the unwholesome inner impulses from breathing out in the coarser form of unwholesome bodily and verbal deeds. Only when he establishes control over the outer expression of the defilements can he turn to deal with them inwardly as mental obsessions that appear in the process of meditation.

The practice of moral discipline consists negatively in abstinence from immoral actions of body and speech and positively in the observance of ethical principles promoting peace within oneself and harmony in one's relations with others. The basic code of moral discipline taught by the Buddha for the guidance of his lay followers is the five precepts: abstinence from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from intoxicating drugs and drinks. These principles are bindings as minimal ethical obligations for all practitioners of the Buddhist path, and within their bounds considerable progress in meditation can be made. However, those aspiring to reach the higher levels of jhanas and to pursue the path further to the stages of liberation, are encouraged to take up the more complete moral discipline pertaining to the life of renunciation. Early Buddhism is unambiguous in its emphasis on the limitations of household life for following the path in its fullness and perfection. Time and again the texts say that the household life is confining, a "path for the dust of passion," while the life of homelessness is like open space. Thus a disciple who is fully intent upon making rapid progress towards Nibbana will when outer conditions allow for it, "shave off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness" (M.i,179).

The moral training for the bhikkhus or monks has been arranged into a system called the fourfold purification of morality *(catuparisuddhisila)*.[6] The first component of this scheme, its backbone, consists in the *morality of restraint according to the Patimokkha,*the code of 227 training precepts promulgated by the Buddha to regulate the conduct of the Sangha or monastic order. Each of these rules is in some way intended to facilitate control over the defilements and to induce a mode of living marked by harmlessness, contentment and simplicity. The second aspect of the monk's moral discipline is *restraint of the senses,* by which the monk maintains close watchfulness over his mind as he engages in sense contacts so that he does not give rise to desire for pleasurable objects and aversion towards repulsive ones. Third, the monk is to live by a *purified livelihood,*obtaining his basic requisites such as robes, food, lodgings and medicines in ways consistent with his vocation. The fourth factor of the moral training is *proper use of the requisites,* which means that the monk should reflect upon the purposes for which he makes use of his requisites and should employ them only for maintaining his health and comfort, not for luxury and enjoyment.

After establishing a foundation of purified morality, the aspirant to meditation is advised to cut off any outer impediments *(palibodha)* that may hinder his efforts to lead a contemplative life. These impediments are numbered as ten: a dwelling, which becomes an impediment for those who allow their minds to become preoccupied with its upkeep or with its appurtenances; a family of relatives or supporters with whom the aspirant may become emotionally involved in ways that hinder his progress; gains, which may bind the monk by obligation to those who offer them; a class of students who must be instructed; building work, which demands time and attention; travel; kin, meaning parents, teachers, pupils or close friends; illness; the study of scriptures; and supernormal powers, which are an impediment to insight (Vism.90-97; PP.91-98).

The Good Friend and the Subject of Meditation

The path of practice leading to the jhanas is an arduous course involving precise techniques and skillfulness is needed in dealing with the pitfalls that lie along the way. The knowledge of how to attain the jhanas has been transmitted through a lineage of teachers going back to the time of the Buddha himself. A prospective meditator is advised to avail himself of the living heritage of accumulated knowledge and experience by placing himself under the care of a qualified teacher, described as a "good friend" *(kalyanamitta),* one who gives guidance and wise advice rooted in his own practice and experience. On the basis of either of the power of penetrating others minds, or by personal observation, or by questioning, the teacher will size up the temperament of his new pupil and then select a meditation subject for him appropriate to his temperament.

The various meditation subjects that the Buddha prescribed for the development of serenity have been collected in the commentaries into a set called the forty *kammatthana.*This word means literally a place of work, and is applied to the subject of meditation as the place where the meditator undertakes the work of meditation. The forty meditation subjects are distributed into seven categories, enumerated in the *Visuddhimagga* as follows: ten kasinas, ten kinds of foulness, ten recollections, four divine abidings, four immaterial states, one perception, and one defining.[7]

A kasina is a device representing a particular quality used as a support for concentration. The ten kasinas are those of earth, water, fire and air; four color kasinas — blue, yellow, red and white; the light kasina and the limited space kasina. The kasina can be either a naturally occurring form of the element or color chosen, or an artificially produced device such as a disk that the meditator can use at his convenience in his meditation quarters.

The ten kinds of foulness are ten stages in the decomposition of a corpse: the bloated, the livid, the festering, the cut-up, the gnawed, the scattered, the hacked and scattered, the bleeding, the worm-infested and a skeleton. The primary purpose of these meditations is to reduce sensual lust by gaining a clear perception of the repulsiveness of the body.

The ten recollections are the recollections of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, morality, generosity and the deities, mindfulness of death, mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of breathing, and the recollection of peace. The first three are devotional contemplations on the sublime qualities of the "Three Jewels," the primary objects of Buddhist virtues and on the deities inhabiting the heavenly worlds, intended principally for those still intent on a higher rebirth. Mindfulness of death is reflection on the inevitability of death, a constant spur to spiritual exertion. Mindfulness of the body involves the mental dissection of the body into thirty-two parts, undertaken with a view to perceiving its unattractiveness. Mindfulness of breathing is awareness of the in-and-out movement of the breath, perhaps the most fundamental of all Buddhist meditation subjects. And the recollection of peace is reflection on the qualities of Nibbana.

The four divine abidings *(brahmavihara)* are the development of boundless loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. These meditations are also called the "immeasurables" *(appamañña)* because they are to be developed towards all sentient beings without qualification or exclusiveness.

The four immaterial states are the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. These are the objects leading to the corresponding meditative attainments, the immaterial jhanas.

The one perception is the perception of the repulsiveness of food. The one defining is the defining of the four elements, that is, the analysis of the physical body into the elemental modes of solidity, fluidity, heat and oscillation.

The forty meditation subjects are treated in the commentarial texts from two important angles — one their ability to induce different levels of concentration, the other their suitability for differing temperaments. Not all meditation subjects are equally effective in inducing the deeper levels of concentration. They are first distinguished on the basis of their capacity for inducing only access concentration or for inducing full absorption; those capable of inducing absorption are then distinguished further according to their ability to induce the different levels of jhana.

Of the forty subjects, ten are capable of leading only to access concentration: eight recollections — i.e., all except mindfulness of the body and mindfulness of breathing — plus the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment and the defining of the four elements. These, because they are occupied with a diversity of qualities and involve and active application of discursive thought, cannot lead beyond access. The other thirty subjects can all lead to absorption.

The ten kasinas and mindfulness of breathing, owing to their simplicity and freedom from thought construction, can lead to all four jhanas. The ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body lead only to the first jhana, being limited because the mind can only hold onto them with the aid of applied thought *(vitakka)* which is absent in the second and higher jhanas. The first three divine abidings can induce the lower three jhanas but not the fourth, since they arise in association with pleasant feeling, while the divine abiding of equanimity occurs only at the level of the fourth jhana, where neutral feeling gains ascendency. The four immaterial states conduce to the respective immaterial jhanas corresponding to their names.

The forty subjects are also differentiated according to their appropriateness for different character types. Six main character types are recognized — the greedy, the hating, the deluded, the faithful, the intelligent and the speculative — this oversimplified typology being taken only as a pragmatic guideline which in practice admits various shades and combinations. The ten kind of foulness and mindfulness of the body, clearly intended to attenuate sensual desire, are suitable for those of greedy temperament. Eight subjects — the four divine abidings and four color kasinas — are appropriate for the hating temperament. Mindfulness of breathing is suitable for those of the deluded and the speculative temperament. The first six recollections are appropriate for the faithful temperament. Four subjects — mindfulness of death, the recollection of peace, the defining of the four elements, and the perception of the repulsiveness in nutriment — are especially effective for those of intelligent temperament. The remaining six kasinas and the immaterial states are suitable for all kinds of temperaments. But the kasinas should be limited in size for one of speculative temperament and large in size for one of deluded temperament.

Immediately after giving this breakdown Buddhaghosa adds a proviso to prevent misunderstanding. He states that this division by way of temperament is made on the basis of direct opposition and complete suitability, but actually there is no wholesome form of meditation that does not suppress the defilements and strengthen the virtuous mental factors. Thus an individual meditator may be advised to meditate on foulness to abandon lust, on loving-kindness to abandon hatred, on breathing to cut off discursive thought, and on impermanence to eliminate the conceit "I am" (A.iv,358).

Choosing a Suitable Dwelling

The teacher assigns a meditation subject to his pupil appropriate to his character and explains the methods of developing it. He can teach it gradually to a pupil who is going to remain in close proximity to him, or in detail to one who will go to practice it elsewhere. If the disciple is not going to stay with his teacher he must be careful to select a suitable place for meditation. The texts mention eighteen kinds of monasteries unfavorable to the development of jhana: a large monastery, a new one, a dilapidated one, one near a road, one with a pond, leaves, flowers or fruits, one sought after by many people, one in cities, among timber of fields, where people quarrel, in a port, in border lands, on a frontier, a haunted place, and one without access to a spiritual teacher (Vism. 118-121; PP122-125).

The factors which make a dwelling favorable to meditation are mentioned by the Buddha himself. If should not be too far from or too near a village that can be relied on as an alms resort, and should have a clear path: it should be quiet and secluded; it should be free from rough weather and from harmful insects and animals; one should be able to obtain one's physical requisites while dwelling there; and the dwelling should provide ready access to learned elders and spiritual friends who can be consulted when problems arise in meditation (A.v,15). The types of dwelling places commended by the Buddha most frequently in the suttas as conductive to the jhanas are a secluded dwelling in the forest, at the foot of a tree, on a mountain, in a cleft, in a cave, in a cemetery, on a wooded flatland, in the open air, or on a heap of straw (M.i,181). Having found a suitable dwelling and settled there, the disciple should maintain scrupulous observance of the rules of discipline, He should be content with his simple requisites, exercise control over his sense faculties, be mindful and discerning in all activities, and practice meditation diligently as he was instructed. It is at this point that he meets the first great challenge of his contemplative life, the battle with the five hindrances.

3. The First Jhana and its Factors

The attainment of any jhana comes about through a twofold process of development. On one side the states obstructive to it, called its factors of abandonment, have to be eliminated, on the other the states composing it, called its factors of possession, have to be acquired. In the case of the first jhana the factors of abandonment are the five hindrances and the factors of possession the five basic jhana factors. Both are alluded to in the standard formula for the first jhana, the opening phrase referring to the abandonment of the hindrances and the subsequent portion enumerating the jhana factors:

Quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, he enters and dwells in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. (M.i,1818; Vbh.245)

In this chapter we will first discuss the five hindrances and their abandonment, then we will investigate the jhana factors both individually and by way of their combined contribution to the attainment of the first jhana. We will close the chapter with some remarks on the ways of perfecting the first jhana, a necessary preparation for the further development of concentration.

The Abandoning of the Hindrances

The five hindrances *(pañcanivarana)* are sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. This group, the principal classification the Buddha uses for the obstacles to meditation, receives its name because its five members hinder and envelop the mind, preventing meditative development in the two spheres of serenity and insight. Hence the Buddha calls them "obstructions, hindrances, corruptions of the mind which weaken wisdom"(S.v,94).

The hindrance of sensual desire *(kamachanda)* is explained as desire for the "five strands of sense pleasure," that is, for pleasant forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangibles. It ranges from subtle liking to powerful lust. The hindrance of ill will *(byapada)* signifies aversion directed towards disagreeable persons or things. It can vary in range from mild annoyance to overpowering hatred. Thus the first two hindrances correspond to the first two root defilements, greed and hate. The third root defilement, delusion, is not enumerated separately among the hindrances but can be found underlying the remaining three.

Sloth and torpor is a compound hindrance made up of two components: sloth *(thina),*which is dullness, inertia or mental stiffness; and torpor *(middha),* which is indolence or drowsiness. Restlessness and worry is another double hindrance, restlessness *(uddhacca)*being explained as excitement, agitation or disquietude, worry *(kukkucca)* as the sense of guilt aroused by moral transgressions. Finally, the hindrance of doubt *(vicikiccha)* is explained as uncertainty with regard to the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha and the training.

The Buddha offers two sets of similes to illustrate the detrimental effect of the hindrances. The first compares the five hindrances to five types of calamity: sensual desire is like a debt, ill will like a disease, sloth and torpor like imprisonment, restless and worry like slavery, and doubt like being lost on a desert road. Release from the hindrances is to be seen as freedom from debt, good health, release from prison, emancipation from slavery, and arriving at a place of safety (D.i,71-73). The second set of similes compares the hindrances to five kinds of impurities affecting a bowl of water, preventing a keen-sighted man from seeing his own reflection as it really is. Sensual desire is like a bowl of water mixed with brightly colored paints, ill will like a bowl of boiling water, sloth and torpor like water covered by mossy plants, restlessness and worry like water blown into ripples by the wind, and doubt like muddy water. Just as the keen-eyed man would not be able to see his reflection in these five kinds of water, so one whose mind is obsessed by the five hindrances does not know and see as it is his own good, the good of others or the good of both (S.v,121-24). Although there are numerous defilements opposed to the first jhana the five hindrances alone are called its factors of abandoning. One reason according to the *Visuddhimagga,* is that the hindrances are specifically obstructive to jhana, each hindrance impeding in its own way the mind's capacity for concentration.

The mind affected through lust by greed for varied objective fields does not become concentrated on an object consisting in unity, or being overwhelmed by lust, it does not enter on the way to abandoning the sense-desire element. When pestered by ill will towards an object, it does not occur uninterruptedly. When overcome by stiffness and torpor, it is unwieldy. When seized by agitation and worry, it is unquiet and buzzes about. When stricken by uncertainty, it fails to mount the way to accomplish the attainment of jhana. So it is these only that are called factors of abandonment because they are specifically obstructive to jhana.(Vism.146: PP.152)

A second reason for confining the first jhana's factors of abandoning to the five hindrances is to permit a direct alignment to be made between the hindrances and the jhanic factors. Buddhaghosa states that the abandonment of the five hindrances alone is mentioned in connection with jhana because the hindrances are the direct enemies of the five jhana factors, which the latter must eliminate and abolish. To support his point the commentator cites a passage demonstrating a one-to-one correspondence between the jhana factors and the hindrances: one-pointedness is opposed to sensual desire, rapture to ill will, applied thought to sloth and torpor, happiness to restlessness and worry, and sustained thought to doubt (Vism. 141; PP.147).[8] Thus each jhana factor is seen as having the specific task of eliminating a particular obstruction to the jhana and to correlate these obstructions with the five jhana factors they are collected into a scheme of five hindrances.

The standard passage describing the attainment of the first jhana says that the jhana is entered upon by one who is "secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind." The *Visuddhimagga* explains that there are three kinds of seclusion relevant to the present context — namely, bodily seclusion *(kayaviveka)*, mental seclusion *(cittaviveka)*, and seclusion by suppression *(vikkhambhanaviveka)* (Vism. 140; PP.145). These three terms allude to two distinct sets of exegetical categories. The first two belong to a threefold arrangement made up of bodily seclusion, mental seclusion, and "seclusion from the substance" *(upadhiviveka).* The first means physical withdrawal from active social engagement into a condition of solitude for the purpose of devoting time and energy to spiritual development. The second, which generally presupposes the first, means the seclusion of the mind from its entanglement in defilements; it is in effect equivalent to concentration of at least the access level. The third, "seclusion from the substance," is Nibbana, liberation from the elements of phenomenal existence. The achievement of the first jhana does not depend on the third, which is its outcome rather than prerequisite, but it does require physical solitude and the separation of the mind from defilements, hence bodily and mental seclusion. The third type of seclusion pertinent to the context, seclusion by suppression, belongs to a different scheme generally discussed under the heading of "abandonment" *(pahana)* rather than "seclusion." The type of abandonment required for the attainment of jhana is abandonment by suppression, which means the removal of the hindrances by force of concentration similar to the pressing down of weeds in a pond by means of a porous pot.[9]

The work of overcoming the five hindrances is accomplished through the gradual training *(anupubbasikkha)* which the Buddha has laid down so often in the suttas, such as the Samaññaphala Sutta and the Culahatthipadopama Sutta. The gradual training is a step-by-step process designed to lead the practitioner gradually to liberation. The training begins with moral discipline, the undertaking and observance of specific rules of conduct which enable the disciple to control the coarser modes of bodily and verbal misconduct through which the hindrances find an outlet. With moral discipline as a basis, the disciple practices the restraint of the senses. He does not seize upon the general appearances of the beguiling features of things, but guards and masters his sense faculties so that sensual attractive and repugnant objects no longer become grounds for desire and aversion. Then, endowed with the self-restraint, he develops mindfulness and discernment *(sati-sampajañña)* in all his activities and postures, examining everything he does with clear awareness as to its purpose and suitability. He also cultivates contentment with a minimum of robes, food, shelter and other requisites.

Once he has fulfilled these preliminaries the disciple is prepared to go into solitude to develop the jhanas, and it is here that he directly confronts the five hindrances. The elimination of the hindrances requires that the meditator honestly appraises his own mind. When sensuality, ill will and the other hindrances are present, he must recognize that they are present and he must investigate the conditions that lead to their arising: the latter he must scrupulously avoid. The meditator must also understand the appropriate antidotes for each of the five hindrances. The Buddha says that all the hindrances arise through unwise consideration *(ayoniso manasikara)* and that they can be eliminated by wise consideration *(yoniso manasikara).* Each hindrance, however, has its own specific antidote. Thus wise consideration of the repulsive feature of things is the antidote to sensual desire; wise consideration of loving-kindness counteracts ill will; wise consideration of the elements of effort, exertion and striving opposes sloth and torpor; wise consideration of tranquillity of mind removes restlessness and worry; and wise consideration of the real qualities of things eliminates doubt (S.v,105-106).

Having given up covetousness [i.e., sensual desire] with regard to the world, he dwells with a heart free of covetousness; he cleanses his mind from covetousness. Having given up the blemish of ill will, he dwells without ill will; friendly and compassionate towards all living beings, he cleanses his mind from the blemishes of ill will. Having given up sloth and torpor, he dwells free from sloth and torpor, in the perception of light; mindful and clearly comprehending, he cleanses his mind from sloth and torpor. Having given up restlessness and worry, he dwells without restlessness; his mind being calmed within, he cleanses it from restlessness and worry. Having given up doubt, he dwells as one who has passed beyond doubt; being free from uncertainty about wholesome things, he cleanses his mind from doubt... And when he sees himself free of these five hindrances, joy arises; in him who is joyful, rapture arises; in him whose mind is enraptured, the body is stilled; the body being stilled, he feels happiness; and a happy mind finds concentration. Then, quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, he enters and dwells in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. (D.i,73-74)[10]

The Factors of the First Jhana

The first jhana possesses five component factors: applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness and one-pointedness of mind. Four of these are explicitly mentioned in the formula for the jhana; the fifth, one-pointedness, is mentioned elsewhere in the suttas but is already suggested by the notion of jhana itself. These five states receive their name, first because they lead the mind from the level of ordinary consciousness to the jhanic level, and second because they constitute the first jhana and give it its distinct definition.

The jhana factors are first aroused by the meditator's initial efforts to concentrate upon one of the prescribed objects for developing jhana. As he fixes his mind on the preliminary object, such as a kasina disk, a point is eventually reached where he can perceive the object as clearly with his eyes closed as with them open. This visualized object is called the learning sign *(uggahanimitta).* As he concentrates on the learning sign, his efforts call into play the embryonic jhana factors, which grow in force, duration and prominence as a result of the meditative exertion. These factors, being incompatible with the hindrances, attenuate them, exclude them, and hold them at bay. With continued practice the learning sign gives rise to a purified luminous replica of itself called the counterpart sign *(patibhaganimitta)*, the manifestation of which marks the complete suppression of the hindrances and the attainment of access concentration *(upacarasamadhi).* All three events — the suppression of the hindrances, the arising of the counterpart sign, and the attainment of access concentration — take place at precisely the same moment, without interval (Vism. 126; PP.131). And though previously the process of mental cultivation may have required the elimination of different hindrances at different times, when access is achieved they all subside together:

Simultaneously with his acquiring the counterpart sign his lust is abandoned by suppression owing to his giving no attention externally to sense desires (as object). And owing to his abandoning of approval, ill will is abandoned too, as pus is with the abandoning of blood. Likewise stiffness and torpor is abandoned through exertion of energy, agitation and worry is abandoned through devotion to peaceful things that cause no remorse; and uncertainty about the Master who teaches the way, about the way, and about the fruit of the way, about the way, and about the fruit of the way, is abandoned through the actual experience of the distinction attained. So the five hindrances are abandoned. (Vism. 189; PP.196)

Though the mental factors determinative of the first jhana are present in access concentration, they do not as yet possess sufficient strength to constitute the jhana, but are strong enough only to exclude the hindrances. With continued practice, however, the nascent jhana factors grow in strength until they are capable of issuing in jhana. Because of the instrumental role these factors play both in the attainment and constitution of the first jhana they are deserving of closer individual scrutiny.

APPLIED THOUGHT *(VITAKKA)*

The word *vitakka* frequently appears in the texts in conjunction with the word *vicara*. The pair signify two interconnected but distinct aspects of the thought process, and to bring out the difference between them (as well as their common character), we translate the one as applied thought and the other as sustained thought.

In both the suttas and the Abhidhamma applied thought is defined as the application of the mind to its object *(cetaso abhiniropana),* a function which the *Atthasalini* illustrates thus: "Just as someone ascends the king's palace in dependence on a relative of friend dear to the king, so the mind ascends the object in dependence on applied thought" (Dhs.A.157). This function of applying the mind to the object is common to the wide variety of modes in which the mental factor of applied thought occurs, ranging from sense discrimination to imagination, reasoning and deliberation and to the practice of concentration culminating in the first jhana. Applied thought can be unwholesome as in thoughts of sensual pleasure, ill will and cruelty, or wholesome as in thoughts of renunciation, benevolence and compassion (M.i,116).

In jhana applied through is invariably wholesome and its function of directing the mind upon its object stands forth with special clarity. To convey this the *Visuddhimagga*explains that in jhana the function of applied thought is "to strike at and thresh — for the meditator is said, in virtue of it, to have the object struck at by applied thought, threshed by applied thought" (Vism.142;PP148). The *Milindapanha* makes the same point by defining applied thought as absorption *(appana):* "Just as a carpenter drives a well-fashioned piece of wood into a joint, so applied thought has the characteristic of absorption" (Miln.62).

The object of jhana into which *vitakka* drives the mind and its concomitant states is the counterpart sign, which emerges from the learning sign as the hindrances are suppressed and the mind enters access concentration. The *Visuddhimagga* explains the difference between the two signs thus:

In the learning sign any fault in the kasina is apparent. But the counterpart sign appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, and a hundred times, a thousand times more purified, like a looking-glass disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like the moon's disk coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thunder cloud. But it has neither color nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension (by insight) and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance (Vism. 125-26; PP.130)

The counterpart sign is the object of both access concentration and jhana, which differ neither in their object nor in the removal of the hindrances but in the strength of their respective jhana factors. In the former the factors are still weak, not yet fully developed, while in the jhana they are strong enough to make the mind fully absorbed in the object. In this process applied thought is the factor primarily responsible for directing the mind towards the counterpart sign and thrusting it in with the force of full absorption.

SUSTAINED THOUGHT *(VICARA)*

Vicara seems to represent a more developed phase of the thought process than *vitakka*.The commentaries explain that it has the characteristic of "continued pressure" on the object (Vim. 142; PP.148). Applied thought is described as the first impact of the mind on the object, the gross inceptive phase of thought; sustained thought is described as the act of anchoring the mind on the object, the subtle phase of continued mental pressure. Buddhaghosa illustrates the difference between the two with a series of similes. Applied thought is like striking a bell, sustained thought like the ringing; applied thought is like a bee's flying towards a flower, sustained thought like its buzzing around the flower; applied thought is like a compass pin that stays fixed to the center of a circle, sustained thought like the pin that revolves around (Vism. 142-43; PP.148-49).

These similes make it clear that applied thought and sustained thought functionally associated, perform different tasks. Applied thought brings the mind to the object, sustained thought fixes and anchors it there. Applied thought focuses the mind on the object, sustained thought examines and inspects what is focused on. Applied thought brings a deepening of concentration by again and again leading the mind back to the same object, sustained thought sustains the concentration achieved by keeping the mind anchored on that object.

RAPTURE *(PITI)*

The third factor present in the first jhana is *piti*, usually translated as joy or rapture.[11] In the suttas *piti* is sometimes said to arise from another quality called *pamojja*, translated as joy or gladness, which springs up with the abandonment of the five hindrances. When the disciple sees the five hindrances abandoned in himself "gladness arises within him; thus gladdened, rapture arises in him; and when he is rapturous his body becomes tranquil" (D.i,73). Tranquillity in turn leads to happiness, on the basis of which the mind becomes concentrated. Thus rapture precedes the actual arising of the first jhana, but persists through the remaining stages up to the third jhana.

The Vibhanga defines *piti* as "gladness, joy, joyfulness, mirth, merriment, exultation, exhilaration, and satisfaction of mind" (Vbh. 257). The commentaries ascribe to it the characteristic of endearing, the function of refreshing the body and mind or pervading with rapture, and the manifestation as elation (Vism.143; PP.149). Shwe Zan Aung explains that *"piti* abstracted means interest of varying degrees of intensity, in an object felt as desirable or as calculated to bring happiness."[12]

When defined in terms of agency, piti is that which creates interest in the object; when defined in terms of its nature it is the interest in the object. Because it creates a positive interest in the object, the jhana factor of rapture is able to counter and suppress the hindrance of ill will, a state of aversion implying a negative evaluation of the object.

Rapture is graded into five categories: minor rapture, momentary rapture, showering rapture, uplifting rapture and pervading rapture.[13] Minor rapture is generally the first to appear in the progressive development of meditation; it is capable of causing the hairs of the body to rise. Momentary rapture, which is like lightning, comes next but cannot be sustained for long. Showering rapture runs through the body in waves, producing a thrill but without leaving a lasting impact. Uplifting rapture, which can cause levitation, is more sustained but still tends to disturb concentration, The form of rapture most conductive to the attainment of jhana is all-pervading rapture, which is said to suffuse the whole body so that it becomes like a full bladder or like a mountain cavern inundated with a mighty flood of water.

The *Visuddhimagga* states that what is intended by the jhana factor of rapture is this all-pervading rapture "which is the root of absorption and comes by growth into association with absorption" (Vism.144; PP.151)

HAPPINESS *(SUKHA)*

As a factor of the first jhana, *sukha* signifies pleasant feeling. The word is explicitly defined in the sense by the *Vibhanga* in its analysis of the first jhana: "Therein, what is happiness? Mental pleasure and happiness born of mind-contact, the felt pleasure and happiness born of mind-contact, pleasurable and happy feeling born of mind contact — this is called 'happiness' " (Vbh.257). The *Visuddhimagga* explains that happiness in the first jhana has the characteristic of gratifying, the function of intensifying associated states, and as manifestation, the rendering of aid to its associated states (Vism. 145; PP.151).

Rapture and happiness link together in a very close relationship, but though the two are difficult to distinguish, they are not identical. Happiness is a feeling *(vedana);* rapture a mental formation (sankhara). Happiness always accompanies rapture, so that when rapture is present happiness must always be present; but rapture does not always accompany happiness, for in the third jhana, as we will see, there is happiness but no rapture.
The *Atthasalini*, which explains rapture as "delight in the attaining of the desired object" and happiness as "the enjoyment of the taste of what is acquired," illustrates the difference by means of a simile:

Rapture is like a weary traveler in the desert in summer, who hears of, or sees water of a shady wood. Ease [happiness] is like his enjoying the water of entering the forest shade. For a man who, traveling along the path through a great desert and overcome by the heat, is thirsty and desirous of drink, if he saw a man on the way, would ask 'Where is water?' The other would say, 'Beyond the wood is a dense forest with a natural lake. Go there, and you will get some.' He, hearing these words, would be glad and delighted and as he went would see lotus leaves, etc., fallen on the ground and become more glad and delighted. Going onwards, he would see men with wet clothes and hair, hear the sounds of wild fowl and pea-fowl, etc., see the dense forest of green like a net of jewels growing by the edge of the natural lake, he would see the water lily, the lotus, the white lily, etc., growing in the lake, he would see the clear transparent water, he would be all the more glad and delighted, would descend into the natural lake, bathe and drink at pleasure and, his oppression being allayed, he would eat the fibers and stalks of the lilies, adorn himself with the blue lotus, carry on his shoulders the roots of the mandalaka, ascend from the lake, put on his clothes, dry the bathing cloth in the sun, and in the cool shade where the breeze blew ever so gently lay himself down and saw: 'O bliss! O bliss!' Thus should this illustration be applied. The time of gladness and delight from when he heard of the natural lake and the dense forest till he saw the water is like rapture having the manner of gladness and delight at the object in view. The time when, after his bath and dried he laid himself down in the cool shade, saying, 'O bliss! O bliss!' etc., is the sense of ease [happiness] grown strong, established in that mode of enjoying the taste of the object.[14]

Since rapture and happiness co-exist in the first jhana, this simile should not be taken to imply that they are mutually exclusive. Its purport is to suggest that rapture gains prominence before happiness, for which it helps provide a causal foundation.

In the description of the first jhana, rapture and happiness are said to be "born of seclusion" and to suffuse the whole body of the meditator in such a way that there is no part of his body which remains unaffected by them:

Monks, secluded from sense pleasure... a monk enters and dwells in the first jhana. He steeps, drenches, fills and suffuses his body with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so that there is no part of his entire body that is not suffused with this rapture and happiness. Just as a skilled bath-attendant or his apprentice might strew bathing powder in a copper basin, sprinkle it again and again with water, and knead it together so that the mass of bathing soap would be pervaded, suffused, and saturated with moisture inside and out yet would not ooze moisture, so a monk steeps, drenches, fills and suffuses his body with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so that, there is no part of his entire body that is not suffused with this rapture and happiness born of seclusion. (D.i,74)

ONE-POINTEDNESS *(EKAGGATA)*

Unlike the previous four jhana factors, one-pointedness is not specifically mentioned in the standard formula for the first jhana, but it is included among the jhana factors by the Mahavedalla Sutta (M.i,294) as well as in the Abhidhamma and the commentaries. One-pointedness is a universal mental concomitant, the factor by virtue of which the mind is centered upon its object. It brings the mind to a single point, the point occupied by the object.

One-pointedness is used in the text as a synonym for concentration *(samadhi)* which has the characteristic of non-distraction, the function of eliminating distractions, non-wavering as its manifestation, and happiness as its proximate cause (Vism.85; PP.85). As a jhana factor one-pointedness is always directed to a wholesome object and wards off unwholesome influences, in particular the hindrance of sensual desire. As the hindrances are absent in jhana one-pointedness acquires special strength, based on the previous sustained effort of concentration.

Besides the five jhana factors, the first jhana contains a great number of other mental factors functioning in unison as coordinate members of a single state of consciousness. Already the Anupada Sutta lists such additional components of the first jhana as contact, feeling, perception, volition, consciousness, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention (M.iii,25). In the Abhidhamma literature this is extended still further up to thirty-three indispensable components. Nevertheless, only five states are called the factors of the first jhana, for only these have the functions of inhibiting the five hindrances and fixing the mind in absorption. For the jhana to arise all these five factors must be present simultaneously, exercising their special operations:

But applied thought directs the mind onto the object; sustained thought keeps it anchored there. Happiness [rapture] produced by the success of the effort refreshes the mind whose effort has succeeded through not being distracted by those hindrances; and bliss [happiness] intensifies it for the same reason. Then unification aided by this directing onto, this anchoring, this refreshing and this intensifying, evenly and rightly centers the mind with its remaining associated states on the object consisting in unity. Consequently possession of five factors should be understood as the arising of these five, namely, applied thought, sustained thought, happiness [rapture], bliss [happiness], and unification of mind. For it is when these are arisen that jhana is said to be arisen, which is why they are called the five factors of possession. (Vism.146;PP.152)

Each jhana factor serves as support for the one which succeeds it. Applied thought must direct the mind to its object in order for sustained thought to anchor it there. Only when the mind is anchored can the interest develop which will culminate in rapture. As rapture develops it brings happiness to maturity, and this spiritual happiness, by providing an alternative to the fickle pleasures of the senses, aids the growth of one-pointedness. In this way, as Nagasena explains, all the other wholesome states lead to concentration, which stands at their head like the apex on the roof of a house (Miln. 38-39).

Perfecting the First Jhana

The difference between access and absorption concentration, as we have said, does not lie in the absence of the hindrances, which is common to both, but in the relative strength of the jhana factors. In access the factors are weak so that concentration is fragile, comparable to a child who walks a few steps and then falls down. But in absorption the jhana factors are strong and well developed so that the mind can remain continuously in concentration just as a healthy man can remain standing on his feet for a whole day and night (Vism.126; PP.131).

Because full absorption offers the benefit of strengthened concentration, a meditator who gains access is encouraged to strive for the attainment of jhana. To develop his practice several important measures are recommended.[15] The meditator should live in a suitable dwelling, rely upon a suitable alms resort, avoid profitless talk, associate only with spiritually-minded companions, make use only of suitable food, live in a congenial climate, and maintain his practice in a suitable posture. He should also cultivate the ten kinds of skill in absorption. He should clean his lodging and his physical body so that they conduce to clear meditation, balance his spiritual faculties by seeing that faith is balanced with wisdom and energy with concentration, and he must be skillful in producing and developing the sign of concentration (1-3). He should exert the mind when it is slack, restrain it when it is agitated, encourage it when it is restless or dejected, and look at the mind with equanimity when all is proceeding well (4-7). The meditator should avoid distracting persons, should approach people experienced in concentration, and should be firm in his resolution to attain jhana (8-10).

After attaining the first jhana a few times the meditator is not advised to set out immediately striving for the second jhana. This would be a foolish and profitless spiritual ambition. Before he is prepared to make the second jhana the goal of his endeavor he must first bring the first jhana to perfection. If he is too eager to reach the second jhana before he has perfected the first, he is likely to fail to gain the second and find himself unable to regain the first. The Buddha compares such a meditator to a foolish cow who, while still unfamiliar with her own pasture, sets out for new pastures and gets lost in the mountains: she fails to find food or drink and is unable to find her way home (A.iv, 418-19).

The perfecting of the first jhana involves two steps: the extension of the sign and the achievement of the five masteries. The extension of the sign means extending the size of the counterpart sign, the object of the jhana. Beginning with a small area, the size of one or two fingers, the meditator gradually learns to broaden the sign until the mental image can be made to cover the world-sphere or even beyond (Vism. 152-53; PP.158-59).

Following this the meditator should try to acquire five kinds of mastery over the jhana: mastery in adverting, in attaining, in resolving, in emerging and in reviewing.[16] Mastery in adverting is the ability to advert to the jhana factors one by one after emerging from the jhana, wherever he wants, whenever he wants, and for as long as he wants. Mastery in attaining is the ability to enter upon jhana quickly, mastery in resolving the ability to remain in the jhana for exactly the pre-determined length of time, mastery in emerging the ability to emerge from jhana quickly without difficulty, and mastery in reviewing the ability to review the jhana and its factors with retrospective knowledge immediately after adverting to them. When the meditator has achieved this fivefold mastery, then he is ready to strive for the second jhana.

4. The Higher Jhanas

In this chapter we will survey the higher states of jhana. First we will discuss the remaining three jhanas of the fine-material sphere, using the descriptive formulas of the suttas as our starting point and the later literature as our source for the methods of practice that lead to these attainments. Following this we will consider the four meditative states that pertain to the immaterial sphere, which come to be called the immaterial jhanas. Our examination will bring out the dynamic character of the process by which the jhanas are successively achieved. The attainment of the higher jhanas of the fine-material sphere, we will see, involves the successive elimination of the grosser factors and the bringing to prominence of the subtler ones, the attainment of the formless jhanas the replacement of grosser objects with successively more refined objects. From our study it will become clear that the jhanas link together in a graded sequence of development in which the lower serves as basis for the higher and the higher intensifies and purifies states already present in the lower. We will end the chapter with a brief look at the connection between the jhanas and the Buddhist teaching of rebirth.

The Higher Fine-material Jhanas

The formula for the attainment of the *second jhana* runs as follows:

With the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought he enters and dwells in the second jhana, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration (M.i,181; Vbh. 245)

The second jhana, like the first, is attained by eliminating the factors to be abandoned and by developing the factors of possession. In this case however, the factors to be abandoned are the two initial factors of the first jhana itself, applied thought and sustained thought; the factors of possession are the three remaining jhana factors, rapture, happiness and one-pointedness. Hence the formula begins "with the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought," and then mentions the jhana's positive endowments.

After achieving the five kinds of mastery over the first jhana, a meditator who wishes to reach the second jhana should enter the first jhana and contemplate its defects. These are twofold: one, which might be called the defect of proximate corruption, is the nearness of the five hindrances, against which the first jhana provides only a relatively mild safeguard; the other defect, inherent to the first jhana, is its inclusion of applied and sustained thought, which now appear as gross, even as impediments needing to be eliminated to attain the more peaceful and subtle second jhana.

By reflecting upon the second jhana as more tranquil and sublime than the first, the meditator ends his attachment to the first jhana and engages in renewed striving with the aim of reaching the higher stage. He directs his mind to his meditation subject — which must be one capable of inducing the higher jhanas such as a kasina or the breath — and resolves to overcome applied and sustained thought. When his practice comes to maturity the two kinds of thought subside and the second jhana arises. In the second jhana only three of the original five jhana factors remain — rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness. Moreover, with the elimination of the two grosser factors these have acquired a subtler and more peaceful tone.[17]

Besides the main jhana factors, the canonical formula includes several other states in its description of the second jhana. "Internal confidence" *(ajjhattamsampasadanam),*conveys the twofold meaning of faith and tranquillity. In the first jhana the meditator's faith lacked full clarity and serenity due to "the disturbance created by applied and sustained thought, like water ruffled by ripples and wavelets" (Vism. 157; PP.163). But when applied and sustained thought subside, the mind becomes very peaceful and the meditator's faith acquires fuller confidence.

The formula also mentions unification of mind *(cetaso ekodibhavam),* which is identified with one-pointedness or concentration. Though present in the first jhana, concentration only gains special mention in connection with the second jhana since it is here that it acquires eminence. In the first jhana concentration was still imperfect, being subject to the disturbing influence of applied and sustained thought. For the same reason this jhana, along with its constituent rapture and happiness, is said to be born of concentration *(samadhijam):* "It is only this concentration that is quite worthy to be called 'concentration' because of its complete confidence and extreme immobility due to absence of disturbance by applied and sustained thought" (Vism.158; PP.164).

To attain the *third jhana* the meditator must use the same method he used to ascend from the first jhana to the second. He must master the second jhana in the five ways, enter and emerge from it, and reflect upon its defects. In this case the defect of proximate corruption is the nearness of applied and sustained thought, which threaten to disrupt the serenity of the second jhana; its inherent defect is the presence of rapture, which now appears as a gross factor that should be discarded. Aware of the imperfections in the second jhana, the meditator cultivates indifference towards it and aspires instead for the peace and sublimity of the third jhana, towards the attainment of which he now directs his efforts. When his practice matures he enters the third jhana, which has the two jhana factors that remain when the rapture disappears, happiness and one-pointedness, and which the suttas describe as follows:

> With the fading away of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and discerning; and he experiences in his own person that happiness of which the noble ones say: 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful' — thus he enters and dwells in the third jhana. (M.i,182; Vbh.245)

The formula indicates that the third jhana contains, besides its two defining factors, three additional components not included among the jhana factors: equanimity, mindfulness and discernment. Equanimity is mentioned twice. The Pali word for equanimity, *upekkha,*occurs in the texts with a wide range of meanings, the most important being neutral feeling — that is, feeling which is neither painful nor pleasant — and the mental quality of inner balance or equipoise called "specific neutrality" *(tatramajjhattata* — see Vism.161; PP.167). The equanimity referred to in the formula is a mode of specific neutrality which belongs to the aggregate of mental formations *(sankharakkhandha)* and thus should not be confused with equanimity as neutral feeling. Though the two are often associated, each can exist independently of the other, and in the third jhana equanimity as specific neutrality co-exists with happiness or pleasant feeling.

The meditator in third jhana is also said to be mindful and discerning, which points to another pair of frequently conjoined mental functions. Mindfulness *(sati),* in this context, means the remembrance of the meditation object, the constant bearing of the object in mind without allowing it to float away. Discernment *(sampajañña)* is an aspect of wisdom or understanding which scrutinizes the object and grasps its nature free from delusion. Though these two factors were already present even in the first two jhanas, they are first mentioned only in connection with the third since it is here that their efficacy becomes manifest. The two are needed particularly to avoid a return to rapture. Just as a suckling calf, removed from its mother and left unguarded, again approaches the mother, so the happiness of jhana tends to veer towards rapture, its natural partner, if unguarded by mindfulness and discernment (Dhs. A.219). To prevent this and the consequent loss of the third jhana is the task of mindfulness and discernment.

The attainment of the *fourth jhana* commences with the aforesaid procedure. In this case the meditator sees that the third jhana is threatened by the proximity of rapture, which is ever ready to swell up again due to its natural affinity with happiness; he also sees that it is inherently defective due to the presence of happiness, a gross factor which provides fuel for clinging. He then contemplates the state where equanimous feeling and one-pointedness subsist together — the fourth jhana — as far more peaceful and secure than anything he has so far experienced, and therefore as far more desirable. Taking as his object the same counterpart sign he took for the earlier jhana, he strengthens his efforts in concentration for the purpose of abandoning the gross factor of happiness and entering the higher jhana. When his practice matures the mind enters absorption into the fourth jhana:

With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhana, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. (M.i,182; Vbh.245)

The first part of this formula specifies the conditions for the attainment of this jhana — also called the neither-painful-nor-pleasant liberation of mind (M.i, 296) — to be the abandoning of four kinds of feeling incompatible with it, the first two signifying bodily feelings, the latter two the corresponding mental feelings. The formula also introduces several new terms and phrases which have not been encountered previously. First, it mentions a new feeling, neither-pain-nor-pleasure *(adukkhamasukha),* which remains after the other four feelings have subsided. This kind of feeling also called equanimous or neutral feeling, replaces happiness as the concomitant feeling of the jhana and also figures as one of the jhana factors. Thus this attainment has two jhana factors: neutral feeling and one-pointedness of mind. Previously the ascent from one jhana to the next was marked by the progressive elimination of the coarser jhana factors, but none were added to replace those which were excluded. But now, in the move from the third to the fourth jhana, a substitution occurs, neutral feeling moving in to take the place of happiness.

In addition we also find a new phrase composed of familiar terms, "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity" *(upekkhasatiparisuddhi).* The Vibhanga explains: "This mindfulness is cleared, purified, clarified by equanimity" (Vbh. 261), and Buddhaghosa adds: "for the mindfulness in this jhana is quite purified, and its purification is effected by equanimity, not by anything else" (Vism.167; PP.174). The equanimity which purifies the mindfulness is not neutral feeling, as might be supposed, but specific neutrality, the sublime impartiality free from attachment and aversion, which also pertains to this jhana. Though both specific neutrality and mindfulness were present in the lower three jhanas, none among these is said to have "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity." The reason is that in the lower jhanas the equanimity present was not purified itself, being overshadowed by opposing states and lacking association with equanimous feeling. It is like a crescent moon which exists by day but cannot be seen because of the sunlight and the bright sky. But in the fourth jhana, where equanimity gains the support of equanimous feeling, it shines forth like the crescent moon at night and purifies mindfulness and the other associated states (Vism. 169; PP.175).

The Immaterial Jhanas

Beyond the four jhanas lie four higher attainments in the scale of concentration, referred to in the suttas as the "peaceful immaterial liberations transcending material form" *(santa vimokkha atikammarupe aruppa*, M.i,33). In the commentaries they are also called the immaterial jhanas, and while this expression is not found in the suttas it seems appropriate in so far as these states correspond to jhanic levels of consciousness and continue the same process of mental unification initiated by the original four jhanas, now sometimes called the fine-material jhanas. The immaterial jhanas are designated, not by numerical names like their predecessors, but by the names of their objective spheres: the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.[18] They receive the designation "immaterial" or " formless" *(arupa)* because they are achieved by surmounting all perceptions of material form, including the subtle form of the counterpart sign which served as the object of the previous jhanas, and because they are the subjective correlates of the immaterial planes of existence.

Like the fine-material jhanas follow a fixed sequence and must be attained in the order in which they are presented. That is, the meditator who wishes to achieve the immaterial jhanas must begin with the base of boundless space and then proceed step by step up to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. However, an important difference separates the modes of progress in the two cases. In the case of the fine-material jhanas, the ascent from one jhana to another involves a surmounting of jhana factors. To rise from the first jhana to the second the meditator must eliminate applied thought and sustained thought, to rise from the second to the third he must overcome rapture, and to rise from the third to the fourth he must replace pleasant with neutral feeling. Thus progress involves a reduction and refinement of the jhana factors, from the initial five to the culmination in one-pointedness and neutral feeling.

Once the fourth jhana is reached the jhana factors remain constant, and in higher ascent to the immaterial attainments there is no further elimination of jhana factors. For this reason the formless jhanas, when classified from the perspective of their factorial constitution as is done in the Abhidhamma, are considered modes of the fourth jhana. They are all two-factored jhanas, constituted by one-pointedness and equanimous feeling.

Rather than being determined by a surmounting of factors, the order of the immaterial jhanas is determined by a surmounting of objects. Whereas for the lower jhanas the object can remain constant but the factors must be changed, for the immaterial jhanas the factors remain constant while the objects change. The base of boundless space eliminates the kasina object of the fourth jhana, the base of boundless consciousness surmounts the object of the base of boundless space, the base of nothingness surmounts the object of base of boundless consciousness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception surmounts the objects the object of the base of nothingness.

Because the objects become progressively more subtle at each level, the jhana factors of equanimous feeling and one-pointedness, while remaining constant in nature throughout, become correspondingly more refined in quality. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with a simile of four pieces of cloth of the same measurements, spun by the same person, yet made of thick, thin, thinner and very thin thread respectively (Vism. 339; PP.369). Also, whereas the four lower jhanas can each take a variety of objects — the ten kasinas, the in-and-out breath, etc. — and do not stand in any integral relation to these objects, the four immaterial jhanas each take a single object inseparably related to the attainment itself. The first is attained solely with the base of boundless space as object, the second with the base of boundless consciousness, and so forth.

The motivation which initially leads a meditator to seek the immaterial attainments is a clear recognition of the dangers inherent in material existence: it is in virtue of matter that injuries and death by weapons and knives occur that one is afflicted with diseases, subject of hunger and thirst, while none of this takes place on the immaterial planes of existence (M.i,410). Wishing to escape these dangers by taking rebirth in the immaterial planes, the meditator must first attain the four fine-material jhanas and master the fourth jhana with any kasina as object except the omitted space kasina. By this much the meditator has risen above gross matter, but he still has not transcended the subtle material form comprised by the luminous counterpart sign which is the object of his jhana. To reach the formless attainments the meditator, after emerging from the fourth jhana, must consider that even that jhana, as refined as it is, still has an object consisting in material form and thus is distantly connected with gross matter; moreover, it is close to happiness, a factor of the third jhana, and is far coarser than the immaterial states. The meditator sees the base of boundless space, the first immaterial jhana, as more peaceful and sublime than the fourth fine-material jhana and as more safely removed from materiality.

Following these preparatory reflections, the meditator enters the fourth jhana based on a kasina object and extends the counterpart sign of the kasina "to the limit of the world-sphere, or as far as he likes." Then, after emerging from the fourth jhana, he must remove the kasina by attending exclusively to the space it has been made to cover without attending to the kasina itself. Taking as his object the space left after the removal of the kasina, the meditator adverts to it as "boundless space" or simply as "space, space," striking at it with applied and sustained thought. As he cultivates this practice over and over, eventually the consciousness pertaining to the base of boundless space arises with boundless space as its object (Vism. 327-28; PP.355-56).

A meditator who has gained mastery over the base of boundless space, wishing to attain as well the second immaterial jhana, must reflect upon the two defects of the first attainment which are its proximity to the fine-material jhanas and its grossness compared to the base of boundless consciousness. Having in this way developed indifferent to the lower attainment, he must next enter and emerge from the base of boundless space and then fix his attention upon the consciousness that occurred there pervading the boundless space. Since the space taken as the object by the first formless jhana was boundless, the consciousness of that space also involves an aspect of boundlessness, and it is to this boundless consciousness that the aspirant for the next attainment adverts. He is not to attend to it merely as boundless, but as "boundless consciousness" or simply as "consciousness." He continues to cultivate this sign again and again until the consciousness belonging to the base of boundless consciousness arises in absorption taking as its object the boundless consciousness pertaining to the first immaterial state (Vism. 331-32; PP.360-61).

To attain the next formless state, the base of nothingness, the meditator who has mastered the base of boundless consciousness must contemplate its defects in the same twofold manner and advert to the superior peacefulness of the base of nothingness. Without giving any more attention to the base of boundless consciousness, he should "give attention to the present non-existence, voidness, secluded aspect of that same past consciousness belonging to the base consisting of boundless space" (Vism. 333; PP.362). In other words, the meditator is to focus upon the present absence or non-existence of the consciousness belonging to the base of boundless space, adverting to it over and over thus: "There is not, there is not" or "void, void". When his efforts fructify there arises in absorption a consciousness belonging to the base of nothingness, with the non-existence of the consciousness of boundless space as its object. Whereas the second immaterial state relates to the consciousness of boundless space positively, by focusing upon the content of that consciousness and appropriating its boundlessness, the third immaterial state relates to it negatively, by excluding that consciousness from awareness and making the absence or present non-existence of that consciousness its object.

The fourth and final immaterial jhana, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, is reached through the same preliminary procedure. The meditator can also reflect upon the unsatisfactoriness of perception, thinking: "Perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart... this is peaceful, this is sublime, that is to say, neither-perception-nor-non-perception" (M.ii,231). In this way he ends his attachment to the base of nothingness and strengthens his resolve to attain the next higher stage. He then adverts to the four mental aggregates that constitute the attainment of the base of nothingness — its feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness — contemplating them as "peaceful, peaceful," reviewing that base and striking at it with applied and sustained thought. As he does so the hindrances are suppressed, the mind passes through access and enters the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

This jhana receives its name because, on the one hand, it lacks gross perception with its function of clearly discerning objects, and thus cannot be said to have perception; on the other, it retains a very subtle perception, and thus cannot be said to be without perception. Because all the mental functions are here reduced to the finest and most subtle level, this jhana is also named the attainment with residual formations. At this level the mind has reached the highest possible development in the direction of pure serenity. It has attained the most intense degree of concentration, becoming so refined that consciousness can no longer be described in terms of existence or non-existence. Yet even this attainment, from the Buddhist point of view, is still a mundane state which must finally give way to insight that alone leads to true liberation.

The Jhanas and Rebirth

Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings in whom ignorance and craving still linger are subject to rebirth following death. Their mode of rebirth is determined by their kamma, their volitional action, wholesome kamma issuing in a good rebirth and unwholesome kamma in a bad rebirth. As a kind of wholesome kamma the attainment of jhana can play a key role in the rebirth process, being considered a weighty good kamma which takes precedence over other lesser kammas in determining the future rebirth of the person who attains it.

Buddhist cosmology groups the numerous planes of existence into which rebirth takes place into three broad spheres each of which comprises a number of subsidiary planes. The sense-sphere *(kamadhatu)* is the field of rebirth for evil deeds and for meritorious deeds falling short of the jhanas; the fine-material sphere *(rupadhatu),* the field of rebirth for the fine-material jhanas; and the immaterial sphere *(arupadhatu),* the field of rebirth for the immaterial jhanas.

An unwholesome kamma, should it become determinative of rebirth, will lead to a new existence in one of the four planes of misery belonging to the sense-sphere: the hells, the animal kingdom, the sphere of afflicted spirits, or the host of titans. A wholesome kamma of a subjhanic type produces rebirth in one of the seven happy planes in the sense-sphere, the human world or the six heavenly worlds.

Above the sense-sphere realms are the fine-material realms, into which rebirth is gained only through the attainment of the fine-material jhanas. The sixteen realms in this sphere are hierarchically ordered in correlation with the four jhanas. Those who have practiced the first jhana to a minor degree are reborn in the Realm of the Retinue of Brahma, to a moderate degree in the Realm of the Ministers of Brahma, and to a superior degree in the Realm of the Great Brahma.[19] Similarly, practicing the second jhana to a minor degree brings rebirth in the Realm of Minor Luster, to a moderate degree in the Realm of Infinite Luster, and to a superior degree the Realm of Radiant Luster.[20] Again, practicing the third jhana to a minor degree brings rebirth in the Realm of Minor Aura, to a moderate degree in the Realm of Infinite Aura, and to a superior degree in the Realm of Steady Aura.[21] Corresponding to the fourth jhana there are seven realms: the Realm of Great Reward, the Realm of Non-percipient Beings, and the five Pure Abodes.[22] With this jhana the rebirth pattern deviates from the former one. It seems that all beings who practice the fourth jhana of the mundane level without reaching any supramundane attainment are reborn in the realm of Great Reward. There is no differentiation by way of inferior, moderate or superior grades of development. The Realm of Non-percipient Beings is reached by those who, after attaining the fourth jhana, then use the power of their meditation to take rebirth with only material bodies; they do not acquire consciousness again until they pass away from this realm. The five Pure Abodes are open only to non-returners *(anagamis),* noble disciples at the penultimate stage of liberation who have eradicated the fetters binding them to the sense-sphere and thence automatically take rebirth in higher realms, where they attain arahatship and reach final deliverance.

Beyond the fine-material sphere lie the immaterial realms, which are four in number — the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. As should be evident, these are realms of rebirth for those who, without having broken the fetters that bind them to samsara, achieve and master one or another of the four immaterial jhanas. Those meditators who have mastery over a formless attainment at the time of death take rebirth in the appropriate plane, where they abide until the kammic force of the jhana is exhausted. Then they pass away, to take rebirth in some other realm as determined by their accumulated kamma.[23]

5. Jhanas and the Supramundane

The Way of Wisdom

The goal of the Buddhist path, complete and permanent liberation from suffering, is to be achieved by practicing the full threefold discipline of morality (sila), concentration (samadhi), and wisdom (pañña). The mundane jhanas, comprising the four fine-material jhanas and the four immaterial jhanas, pertain to the stage of concentration, which they fulfill to an eminent degree. However, taken by themselves, these states do not ensure complete deliverance, for they are incapable of cutting off the roots of suffering. The Buddha teaches that the cause of suffering, the driving power behind the cycle of rebirths, is the defilements with their three unwholesome roots — greed, hatred and delusion. Concentration of the absorption level, no matter to what heights it is pursued, only suppresses the defilements, but cannot destroy their latent seeds. Thence bare mundane jhana, even when sustained, cannot by itself terminate the cycle of rebirths. To the contrary, it may even perpetuate the round. For if any fine-material or immaterial jhana is held to with clinging, it will bring about a rebirth in that particular plane of existence corresponding to its own kammic potency, which can then be followed by rebirth in some lower realm.

What is required to achieve complete deliverance from the cycle of rebirths is the eradication of the defilements. Since the most basic defilement is ignorance (avijja), the key to liberation lies in developing its direct opposite, namely wisdom (pañña).

Since wisdom presupposes a certain proficiency in concentration it is inevitable that jhana comes to claim a place in its development. This place, however, is not fixed and invariable, but as we will see allows for differences depending on the individual meditator's disposition.

Fundamental to the discussion in this chapter is a distinction between two terms crucial to Theravada philosophical exposition, "mundane" *(lokiya)* and "supramundane" *(lokuttara).*The term "mundane" applies to all phenomena comprised in the world *(loka)* — to subtle states of consciousness as well as matter, to virtue as well as evil, to meditative attainments as well as sensual engrossments. The term "supramundane," in contrast, applies exclusively to that which transcends the world, that is the nine supramundane states: Nibbana, the four noble paths *(magga)* leading to Nibbana, and their corresponding fruits *(phala)* which experience the bliss of Nibbana.

Wisdom has the specific characteristic of penetrating the true nature of phenomena. It penetrates the particular and general features of things through direct cognition rather than discursive thought. Its function is "to abolish the darkness of delusion which conceals the individual essences of states" and its manifestation is "non-delusion." Since the Buddha says that one whose mind is concentrated knows and sees things as they are, the proximate cause of wisdom is concentration (Vism. 438; PP.481).

The wisdom instrumental in attaining liberation is divided into two principal types: insight knowledge *(vipassanañana)* and the knowledge pertaining to the supramundane paths *(maggañana).* The first is the direct penetration of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena — impermanence, suffering and non-self.[24] It takes as its objective sphere the five aggregates *(pañcakkhandha)* — material form, feeling perception, mental formations and consciousness. Because insight knowledge takes the world of conditioned formations as its object, it is regarded as a mundane form of wisdom. Insight knowledge does not itself directly eradicate the defilements, but serves to prepare the way for the second type of wisdom, the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which emerges when insight has been brought to its climax. The wisdom of the path, occurring in four distinct stages (to be discussed below), simultaneously realizes Nibbana, fathoms the Four Noble Truths, and cuts off the defilements. This wisdom is called "supramundane" because it rises up from the world of the five aggregates to realize the state transcendent to the world, Nibbana.

The Buddhist disciple, striving for deliverance, begins the development of wisdom by first securely establishing its roots — purified moral discipline and concentration. He then learns and masters the basic material upon which wisdom is to work — the aggregates, elements, sense bases, dependent arising, the Four Noble Truths, etc. He commences the actual practice of wisdom by cultivating insight into the impermanence, suffering and non-self aspect of the five aggregates. When this insight reaches its apex it issues in supramundane wisdom, the right view factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, which turns from conditioned formations to the unconditioned Nibbana and thereby eradicates the defilements.

The Two Vehicles

The Theravada tradition recognizes two alternative approaches to the development of wisdom, between which practitioners are free to choose according to their aptitude and propensity. These two approaches are the vehicle of serenity *(samathayana)* and the vehicle of insight *(vipassanayana).* The meditators who follow them are called, respectively, the *samathayanika,* "one who makes serenity his vehicle," and the *vipassanayanika,* "one who makes insight his vehicle." Since both vehicles, despite their names, are approaches to developing insight, to prevent misunderstanding the latter type of meditator is sometimes called a *suddhavipassanayanika,* "one who makes bare insight his vehicle," or a *sukkhavipassaka,* "a dry-insight worker." Though all three terms appear initially in the commentaries rather than in the suttas, the recognition of the two vehicles seems implicit in a number of canonical passages.

The *samathayanika* is a meditator who first attains access concentration or one of the eight mundane jhanas, then emerges and uses his attainment as a basis for cultivating insight until he arrives at the supramundane path. In contrast, the *vipassanayanika* does not attain mundane jhana prior to practicing insight contemplation, or if he does, does not use it as an instrument for cultivating insight. Instead, without entering and emerging from jhana, he proceeds directly to insight contemplation on mental and material phenomena and by means of this bare insight he reaches the noble path. For both kinds of meditator the experience of the path in any of its four stages always occurs at a level of jhanic intensity and thus necessarily includes supramundane jhana under the heading of right concentration *(samma samadhi),* the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The classical source for the distinction between the two vehicles of serenity and insight is the *Visuddhimagga* where it is explained that when a meditator begins the development of wisdom "if firstly, his vehicle is serenity, [he] should emerge from any fine-material or immaterial jhana except the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and he should discern, according to characteristic, function, etc. the jhana factors consisting of applied thought, etc. and the states associated with them" (Vism. 557; PP679-80). Other commentarial passages allow access concentration to suffice for the vehicle of serenity, but the last immaterial jhana is excluded because its factors are too subtle to be discerned. The meditator whose vehicle is pure insight, on the other hand, is advised to start directly by discerning material and mental phenomena, beginning with the four elements, without utilizing a jhana for this purpose (Vism. 558; PP.680). Thus the *samathayanika* first attains access concentration or mundane jhana and then develops insight knowledge, by means of which he reaches the supramundane path containing wisdom under the heading of right view, and supramundane jhana under the heading of right concentration. The *vipassanayanika,* in contrast, skips over mundane jhana and goes directly into insight contemplation. When he reaches the end of the progression of insight knowledge he arrives at the supramundane path which, as in the previous case, brings together wisdom with supramundane jhana. This jhana counts as his accomplishment of serenity.

For a meditator following the vehicle of serenity the attainment of jhana fulfills two functions: first, it produces a basis of mental purity and inner collectedness needed for undertaking the work of insight contemplation; and second, it serves as an object to be examined with insight in order to discern the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self. Jhana accomplishes the first function by providing a powerful instrument for overcoming the five hindrances. As we have seen, for wisdom to arise the mind must first be concentrated well, and to be concentrated well it must be freed from the hindrances, a task accomplished pre-eminently by the attainment of jhana. Though access concentration will keep the hindrances at bay, jhana will ensure that they are removed to a much safer distance.

In their capacity for producing concentration the jhanas are called the basis *(pada)* for insight, and that particular jhana a meditator enters and emerges from before commencing his practice of insight is designated his *padakajjhana,* the basic or foundational jhana. Insight cannot be practiced while absorbed in jhana, since insight meditation requires investigation and observation, which are impossible when the mind is immersed in one-pointed absorption. But after emerging from the jhana the mind is cleared of the hindrances, and the stillness and clarity that then result conduce to precise, penetrating insight.

The jhanas also enter into the *samathayanika*'s practice in second capacity, that is, as objects for scrutinization by insight. The practice of insight consists essentially in the examination of mental and physical phenomena to discover their marks of impermanence, suffering and non-self. The jhanas a meditator attains provide him with a readily available and strikingly clear object in which to seek out the three characteristics. After emerging from a jhana the meditator will proceed to examine the jhanic consciousness and to discern the way it exemplifies the three universal marks. This process is called *sammasanañana,* "comprehension knowledge," and the jhana subject to such treatment is termed *sammasitajjhana,* "the comprehended jhana"

(Vism. 607-11; PP.706-10). Though the basic jhana and the comprehended jhana will often be the same, the two do not necessarily coincide. A meditator cannot practice comprehension on a jhana higher than he is capable of attaining, but one who uses a higher jhana as his *padakajjhana* can still practice insight comprehension on a lower jhana which he has previously attained and mastered. The admitted difference between the *padakajjhana* and the *sammasitajjhana*leads to discrepant theories about the supramundane concentration of the noble path, as we will see.

Whereas the sequence of training undertaken by the *samathayanika* meditator is unproblematic, the *vipassanayanika*'s approach presents the difficulty of accounting for the concentration he uses to provide a basis for insight. Concentration is needed in order to see and know things as they are, but without access concentration or jhana, what concentration can he use? The solution to this problem is found in a type of concentration distinct from the access and absorption concentrations pertaining to the vehicle of serenity, called "momentary concentration" *(khanika samadhi).* Despite its name, momentary concentration does not signify a single moment of concentration amidst a current of distracted thoughts, but a dynamic concentration which flows from object to object in the ever-changing flux of phenomena, retaining a constant degree of intensity and collectedness sufficient to purify the mind of the hindrances. Momentary concentration arises in the *samathayanika* simultaneously with his post-jhanic attainment of insight, but for the *vipassanayanika* it develops naturally and spontaneously in the course of his insight practice without his having to fix the mind upon a single exclusive object. Thus the follower of the vehicle of insight does not omit concentration altogether from his training, but develops it in a different manner from the practitioner of serenity. Without gaining jhana he goes directly into contemplation on the five aggregates and by observing them constantly from moment to moment acquires momentary concentration as an accompaniment of his investigations. This momentary concentration fulfills the same function as the basic jhana of the serenity vehicle, providing the foundation of mental clarity needed for insight to emerge.

Supramundane Jhana

The climax in the development of insight is the attainment of the supramundane paths and fruits. Each path is a momentary peak experience directly apprehending Nibbana and permanently cutting off certain defilements. These defilements are generally grouped into a set of ten "fetters" *(samyojana)* which keep beings chained to the round of rebirths. The first path, called the path of stream-entry *(sotapatti)* because it marks the entry into the stream of the Dhamma, eradicates the first three fetters — The false view of self, doubt, and clinging to rites and rituals. The disciple who has reached stream-entry has limited his future births to a maximum of seven in the happy realms of the human and heavenly worlds, after which he will attain final deliverance. But an ardent disciple may progress to still higher stages in the same life in which he reaches stream-entry, by making an aspiration for the next higher path and again undertaking the development of insight with the aim of reaching that path.

The next supramundane path is that of the once-returner *(sakadagami).* This path does not eradicate any fetters completely, but it greatly attenuates sensual desire and ill will. The once-returner is so called because he is bound to make an end of suffering after returning to this world only one more time. The third path, that of the non-returner *(anagami)* utterly destroys the sensual desire and ill will weakened by the preceding path. The non-returner is assured that he will never again take rebirth in the sense-sphere; if he does not penetrate higher he will be reborn spontaneously in the Pure Abodes and there reach final Nibbana. The highest path, the path of arahatship, eradicate the remaining five fetters — desire for existence in the fine-material and immaterial spheres, conceit, restlessness and ignorance. The arahant has completed the development of the entire path taught by the Buddha; he has reached the end of rebirths and can sound his "lion's roar": "Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what was to be done has been done, there is nothing further beyond this."

Each path is followed immediately by the supramundane experience of fruition, which results from the path, comes in the same four graded stages, and shares the path's world-transcending character. But whereas the path performs the active function of cutting off defilements, fruition simply enjoys the bliss and peace that result when the path has completed its task. Also, where the path is limited to a single moment of consciousness, the fruition that follows immediately on the path endures for two or three moments. And while each of the four paths occurs only once and can never be repeated, fruition remains accessible to the noble disciple at the appropriate level. He can resort to it as a special meditative state called fruition attainment *(phalasamapatti)* for the purpose of experiencing nibbanic bliss here and now (Vism. 699-702; PP.819-24).

The supramundane paths and fruits always arise as states of jhanic consciousness. They occur as states of jhana because they contain within themselves the jhana factors elevated to an intensity corresponding to that of the jhana factors in the mundane jhanas. Since they possess the jhana factors these states are able to fix upon their object with the force of full absorption. Thence, taking the absorptive force of the jhana factors as the criterion, the paths and fruits may be reckoned as belonging to either the first, second, third or fourth jhana of the fourfold scheme, or to the first, second, third, fourth or fifth jhana of the fivefold scheme.

The basis for the recognition of a supramundane type of jhana goes back to the suttas, especially to the section of "The Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness" where the Buddha defines right concentration of the Noble Eightfold Path by the standard formula for the four jhanas (D.ii,313). However, it is in the Abhidhamma that the connection between the jhanas, paths and fruits comes to be worked out with great intricacy of detail. The *Dhammasangani,* in its section on states of consciousness, expounds each of the path and fruition states of consciousness as occasions, first, of one or another of the four jhanas in the fourfold scheme, and then again as occasions of one or another of the five jhanas in the fivefold scheme (Dhs.74-86). Standard Abhidhammic exposition, as formalized in the synoptical manuals of Abhidhamma, employs the fivefold scheme and brings each of the paths and fruits into connection with each of the five jhanas. In this way the eight types of supramundane consciousness — the path and fruition consciousness of stream-entry, the once-returner, the non-returner and arahatship — proliferate to forty types of supramundane consciousness, since any path or fruit can occur at the level of any of the five jhanas. It should be noted, however, that there are no paths and fruits conjoined with the immaterial attainments, the reason being that supramundane jhana is presented solely from the standpoint of its factorial constitution, which for the immaterial attainment and the fifth jhana is identical — equanimity and one-pointedness.

The fullest treatment of the supramundane jhanas in the authoritative Pali literature can be found in the *Dhammasangani* read in conjunction with its commentary, the *Atthasalini*.The *Dhammasangani* opens its analysis of the first wholesome supramundane consciousness with the words:

On the occasion when one develops supramundane jhana which is emancipating, leading to the demolition (of existence), for the abandonment of views, for reaching the first plane, secluded from sense pleasures... one enters and dwells in the first jhana. (Dhs. 72)

The *Atthasalini* explains the word *lokuttara*, which we have been translating "supramundane," as meaning "it crosses over the world, it transcends the world, it stands having surmounted and overcome the world." It glosses the phrase "one develops jhana" thus: "One develops, produces, cultivates absorption jhana lasting for a single thought-moment." This gloss shows us two things about the consciousness of the path: that it occurs as a jhana at the level of full absorption and that this absorption of the path lasts for only a single thought-moment. The word "emancipating" *(niyyanika)* is explained to mean that this jhana "goes out" from the world, from the round of existence, the phrase "leading to demolition" *(apacayagami)* that it demolishes and dismantles the process of rebirth (Dhs.A.259).

This last phrase points to a striking difference between mundane and supramundane jhana. The *Dhammasangani*'s exposition of the former begins: "On the occasion when one develops *the path for rebirth in the fine-material sphere*... one enters and dwells in the first jhana" [my italics]. Thus, with this statement, mundane jhana is shown to sustain the round of rebirths; it is a wholesome kamma leading to renewed existence. But the supramundane jhana of the path does not promote the continuation of the round. To the contrary, it brings about the round's dismantling and demolition, as the *Atthasalini* shows with an illustrative simile:

The wholesome states of the three planes are said to lead to accumulation because they build up and increase death and rebirth in the round. But not this. Just as when one man has built up a wall eighteen feet high another might take a club and go along demolishing it, so this goes along demolishing and dismantling the deaths and rebirths built up by the wholesome kammas of the three planes by bringing about a deficiency in their conditions. Thus it leads to demolition.[25]

Supramundane jhana is said to be cultivated "for the abandoning of views." This phrase points to the function of the first path, which is to eradicate the fetters. The supramundane jhana of the first path cuts off the fetter of personality view and all speculative views derived from it.
The *Atthasalini* points out that here we should understand that it abandons not only wrong views but other unwholesome states as well, namely, doubt, clinging to rites and rituals, and greed, hatred and delusion strong enough to lead to the plane of misery. The commentary explicates "for reaching the first plane" as meaning for attaining the fruit of stream-entry.

Besides these, several other differences between mundane and supramundane jhana may be briefly noted. First, with regard to their object, the mundane jhanas have as object a conceptual entity such as the counterpart sign of the kasinas or, in the case of the divine abodes, sentient beings. In contrast, for the supramundane jhana of the paths and fruits the object is exclusively Nibbana. With regard to their predominant tone, in mundane jhana the element of serenity prevails, while the supramundane jhana of the paths and fruits brings serenity and insight into balance. Wisdom is present as right view and serenity as right concentration, both function together in perfect harmony, neither one exceeding the other.

This difference in prevailing tone leads into a difference in function or activity between the two kinds of jhana. Both the mundane and supramundane are jhanas in the sense of closely attending *(upanijjhana),* but in the case of mundane jhana this close attention issues merely in absorption into the object, an absorption that can only suppress the defilement temporarily. In the supramundane jhana, particularly of the four paths, the coupling of close attention with wisdom brings the exercise of four functions at a single moment. These four functions each apply to one of the Four Noble Truths. The path penetrates the First Noble Truth by fully understanding suffering; it penetrates the Second Noble Truth by abandoning craving, the origin of suffering; it penetrates the Third Noble Truth by realizing Nibbana, the cessation of suffering; and it penetrates the fourth Noble Truth by developing the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the end of suffering. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with the simile of a lamp, which also performs four tasks simultaneously: it burns the wick, dispels darkness, makes light appear, and consumes oil (Vism.690; PP.808).

The Jhanic Level of the Path and Fruit

When the paths and fruits are assigned to the level of the four or five jhanas, the question arises as to what factor determines their particular level of jhanic intensity. In other words, why do the path and fruit arise for one meditator at the level of the first jhana, for another at the level of the second jhana, and so forth? The commentaries present three theories concerning the determination of the jhanic level of the path, apparently deriving from the lineages of ancient teachers (Vism. 666-67; PP.778-80. Dhs.A.271-74). The first holds that it is the basic jhana, i.e., the jhana used as a basis for the insight leading to emergence in immediate proximity to the path, that governs the difference in the jhanic level of the path. A second theory says that the difference is governed by the aggregates made the objects of insight on the occasion of insight leading to emergence. A third theory holds that it is the personal inclination of the meditator that governs the difference.

According to the first theory the path arisen in a dry-insight meditator who lacks jhana, and the path arisen in one who possesses a jhana attainment but does not use it as a basis for insight, and the path arisen by comprehending formations after emerging from the first jhana, are all paths of the first jhana only. When the path is produced after emerging from the second, third, fourth and fifth jhanas (of the fivefold system) and using these as the basis for insight, then the path pertains to the level of the jhana used as a basis — the second, third, fourth of fifth. For a meditator using an immaterial jhana as basis the path will be a fifth jhana path. Thus in this first theory, when formations are comprehended by insight after emerging from a basic jhana, then it is the jhana attainment emerged from at the point nearest to the path, i.e., just before insight leading to emergence is reached, that makes the path similar in nature to itself.

According to the second theory the path that arises is similar in nature to the states which are being comprehended with insight at the time insight leading to emergence occurs. Thus if the meditator, after emerging from a meditative attainment, is comprehending with insight sense-sphere phenomena or the constituents of the first jhana, then the path produced will occur at the level of the first jhana. On this theory, then, it is the comprehended jhana *(sammasitajjhana)* that determines the jhanic quality of the path. The one qualification that must be added is that a meditator cannot contemplate with insight a jhana higher than he is capable of attaining.

According to the third theory, the path occurs at the level of whichever jhana the meditator wishes — either at the level of the jhana he has used as the basis for insight or at the level of the jhana he has made the object of insight comprehension. In other words, the jhanic quality of the path accords with his personal inclination. However, mere wish alone is not sufficient. For the path to occur at the jhanic level wished for, the mundane jhana must have been either made the basis for insight or used as the object of insight comprehension.

The difference between the three theories can be understood through a simple example.[26] If a meditator reaches the supramundane path by contemplating with insight the first jhana after emerging from the fifth jhana, then according to the first theory his path will belong to the fifth jhana, while according to the second theory it will belong to the first jhana. Thus these two theories are incompatible when a difference obtains between basic jhana and comprehended jhana. But according to the third theory, the path becomes of whichever jhana the meditator wishes, either the first or the fifth. Thus this doctrine does not necessarily clash with the other two.

Buddhaghosa himself does not make a decision among these three theories. He only points out that in all three doctrines, beneath their disagreements, there is the recognition that the insight immediately preceding the supramundane path determines the jhanic character of the path. For this insight is the proximate and the principal cause for the arising of the path, so whether it be the insight leading to emergence near the basic jhana or that occurring through the contemplated jhana or that fixed by the meditator's wish, it is in all cases this final phase of insight that gives definition to the supramundane path. Since the fruition that occurs immediately after the path has an identical constitution to the path, its own supramundane jhana is determined by the path. Thus a first jhana path produces a first jhana fruit, and so forth for the remaining jhanas.

6. Jhana and the Noble Disciples

All noble persons, as we saw, acquire supramundane jhana along with their attainment of the noble paths and fruits. The noble ones at each of the four stages of liberation, moreover, have access to the supramundane jhana of their respective fruition attainments, from the fruition attainment of stream-entry up to the fruition attainments of arahatship. It remains problematic, however to what extent they also enjoy the possession of mundane jhana. To determine an answer to this question we will consult an early typology of seven types of noble disciples, which provides a more psychologically oriented way of classifying the eight noble individuals. A look at the explanation of these seven types will enable us to see the range of jhanic attainment reached by the noble disciples. On this basis we will proceed to assess the place of mundane jhana in the early Buddhist picture of the arahant, the perfected individual.

Seven Types of Disciples

The sevenfold typology is originally found in the Kitagiri Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya (M.i,477-79) and is reformulated in the *Puggalapaññatti* of the Abhidhamma Pitaka. This typology classifies the noble persons on the paths and fruits into seven types: the faith-devotee *(saddhanusari),* the one liberated by faith *(saddhavimutta),* the body-witness *(kayasakkhi),* the one liberated in both ways *(ubhatobhagavimutta),* the truth-devotee *(dhammanusari),* the one attained to understanding *(ditthipatta),* and the one liberated by wisdom *(paññavimutta).* The seven types may be divided into three general groups, each defined by the predominance of a particular spiritual faculty, The first two types are governed by a predominance of faith, the middle two by a predominance of concentration, and the last three by a predominance of wisdom. To this division, however, certain qualifications will have to made as we go along.

[1] The *faith-devotee* is explained the sutta thus:

Herein, monks, some person has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form: nor after seeing with wisdom, have his cankers been destroyed.[27] But he has a certain degree of faith in the Tathagata, a certain degree of devotion to him, and he has these qualities — the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. This person, monks, is called a faith-devotee. (M.i,479)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p 182) defines the faith-devotee from a different angle as a disciple practicing for the fruit of stream-entry in whom the faculty of faith is predominant and who develops the noble path led by faith. It adds that when he is established in the fruit he becomes one liberated by faith. Although the sutta excluded the "peaceful immaterial attainments," i.e., the four immaterial jhana, from the faith-devotee's equipment, this implies nothing with regard to his achievement of the four lower mundane jhanas. It would seem that the faith-devotee can have previously attained any of the four fine-material jhanas before reaching the path, and can also be a dry-insight worker bereft of mundane jhana.

[2] The one *liberated by faith* is strictly and literally defined as a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of stream-entry through to the path of arahatship, who lacks the immaterial jhanas and has a predominance of the faith faculty.

The Buddha explains the one liberated by faith as follows:

Herein, monks, some person has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form; but having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers have been destroyed, and his faith in the Tathagata is settled, deeply rooted, well established. This person, monks, is called one liberated by faith. (M.i,478)

As in the case of the faith-devotee, the one liberated by faith, while lacking the immaterial jhanas, may still be an obtainer of the four mundane jhanas as well as a dry insight worker.

The *Puggalapaññatti* states (pp.184-85) that the person liberated by faith is one who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified by means of wisdom the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata, and having seen with wisdom has eliminated some of his cankers. However, he has not done so as easily as the *ditthipatta*, the person attained to understanding, whose progress is easier due to his superior wisdom. The fact that the one liberated by faith has destroyed only some of this cankers implies that he has advanced beyond the first path but not yet reached the final fruit, the fruit of arahatship.[28]

[3] The *body-witness* is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of stream-entry to the path of arahatship, who has a predominance of the faculty of concentration and can obtain the immaterial jhanas. The sutta explanation reads:

And what person, monks is a body-witness? Herein, monks, some person has reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, and having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers having been destroyed. This person, monks, is called a body-witness. (M.i,478)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p. 184) offers a slight variation in this phrasing, substituting "the eight deliverances" *(atthavimokkha)* for the sutta's "peaceful immaterial deliverances" *(santa vimokkha aruppa).* These eight deliverances consist of three meditative attainments pertaining to the fine-material sphere (inclusive of all four lower jhanas), the four immaterial jhanas, and the cessation of perception and feeling *(saññavedayitanirodha)* — the last a special attainment accessible only to those non-returners and arahats who have also mastered the eight jhanas.[29] The statement of the Puggalapaññatti does not mean either that the achievement of all eight deliverances is necessary to become a body-witness or that the achievement of the three lower deliverances is sufficient. What is both requisite and sufficient to qualify as a body-witness is the partial destruction of defilements coupled with the attainment of at least the lowest immaterial jhana. Thus the body witness becomes fivefold by way of those who obtain any of the four immaterial jhanas and the one who also obtains the cessation of perception and feeling.

[4] One who is *liberated in both ways* is an arahant who has completely destroyed the defilements and possesses the immaterial attainments. The commentaries explain the name "liberated in both ways" as meaning "through the immaterial attainment he is liberated from the material body and through the path (of arahatship) he is liberated from the mental body" (MA.ii,131). The sutta defines this type of disciple thus:

And what person, monks, is liberated in both ways? Herein, monks, someone has reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, and having seen with wisdom, his cankers are destroyed. This person, monks, is called liberated in both ways. (M.i,477)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p.184) gives basically the same formula but replaces "immaterial deliverances" with "the eight deliverances." The same principle of interpretation that applied to the body-witness applies here: the attainment of any immaterial jhana, even the lowest, is sufficient to qualify a person as both-ways liberated. As the commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* says: "One who has attained arahatship after gaining even one [immaterial jhana] is liberated both ways" (Vism.T.ii,466). This type becomes fivefold by way of those who attain arahatship after emerging from one or another of the four immaterial jhanas and the one who attains arahatship after emerging from the attainment of cessation (MA:iii,131).

[5] The *truth-devotee* is a disciple on the first path in whom the faculty of wisdom is predominant. The Buddha explains the truth-devotee as follows:

Herein, monks, some person has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form; nor, after seeing with wisdom, have his cankers been destroyed. But the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata are accepted by him through mere reflection, and he has these qualities — the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. This person, monks, is called a truth-devotee. (M.i,479)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p.185) defines the truth-devotee as one practicing for realization of the fruit of stream-entry in whom the faculty of wisdom is predominant, and who develops the path led by wisdom. It adds that when a truth-devotee is established in the fruit of stream-entry he becomes one attained to understanding, the sixth type. The sutta and Abhidhamma again differ as to emphasis, the one stressing lack of the immaterial jhanas, the other the ariyan stature. Presumably, he may have any of the four fine-material jhanas or be a bare-insight practitioner without any mundane jhana.

[6] The *one attained to understanding* is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels who lacks the immaterial jhanas and has a predominance of the wisdom faculty. The Buddha explains:

And what person, monks, is the one attained to understanding? Herein, monks someone has not reached with his own mental body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, but having seen with wisdom some of his cankers are destroyed, and the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata have been seen and verified by him with wisdom. This person, monks, is called the one attained to understanding. (M.i,478)

The *Puggalapaññatti* (p.185) defines the one attained to understanding as a person who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified by means of wisdom the teachings proclaimed by the Tathagata, and having seen with wisdom has eliminated some of his cankers. He is thus the "wisdom counterpart" of the one liberated by faith, but progresses more easily than the latter by virtue of his sharper wisdom. Like his counterpart, he may possess any of the four mundane jhanas or may be a dry-insight worker.

[7] The *one liberated by wisdom* is an arahant who does not obtain the immaterial attainments. In the words of the sutta:

And what person, monks, is the one liberated by wisdom? Herein, monks, someone has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful material deliverances transcending material form, but having seen with wisdom his cankers are destroyed. This person, monks, is called one liberated by wisdom. (M.i,477-78)

The *Puggalapaññatti*'s definition (p.185) merely replaces "immaterial deliverance" with "the eight deliverances." Though such arahats do not reach the immaterial jhanas it is quite possible for them to attain the lower jhanas. The sutta commentary in fact states that the one liberated by wisdom is fivefold by way of the dry-insight worker and the four who attain arahatship after emerging from the four jhanas.

It should be noted that the one liberated by wisdom is contrasted not with the one liberated by faith, but with the one liberated in both ways. The issue that divides the two types of arahant is the lack or possession of the four immaterial jhanas and the attainment of cessation. The person liberated by faith is found at the six intermediate levels of sanctity, not at the level of arahatship. When he obtains arahatship, lacking the immaterial jhanas, he becomes one liberated by wisdom even though faith rather that wisdom is his predominant faculty. Similarly, a meditator with predominance of concentration who possesses the immaterial attainments will still be liberated in both ways even if wisdom rather than concentration claims first place among his spiritual endowments, as was the case with the venerable Sariputta.

Jhana and the Arahant

From the standpoint of their spiritual stature the seven types of noble persons can be divided into three categories. The first, which includes the faith-devotee and the truth-devotee, consists of those on the path of stream-entry, the first of the eight noble individuals. The second category, comprising the one liberated by faith, the body-witness and the one attained to understanding, consists of those on the six intermediate levels, from the stream-enterer to one on the path of arahatship. The third category, comprising the one liberated in both ways and the one liberated by wisdom, consists only of arahats.[30]

The *ubhatobhagavimutta*, "one liberated in both ways," and the *paññavimutta* "one liberated by wisdom," thus form the terms of a twofold typology of arahats distinguished on the basis of their accomplishment in jhana. The *ubhatobhagavimutta* arahant experiences in his own person the "peaceful deliverances" of the immaterial sphere, the *paññavimutta* arahant lacks this full experience of the immaterial jhanas. Each of these two types, according to the commentaries, again becomes fivefold — the *ubhatobhagavimutta* by way of those who possess the ascending four immaterial jhanas and the attainment of cessation, the *paññavimutta* by way of those who reach arahatship after emerging from one of the four fine-material jhanas and the dry-insight meditator whose insight lacks the support of mundane jhana.

The possibility of attaining the supramundane path without possession of a mundane jhana has been questioned by some Theravada scholars, but the *Visuddhimagga* clearly admits this possibility when it distinguishes between the path arisen in a dry-insight meditator and the path arisen in one who possesses a jhana but does not use it as a basis for insight (Vism.666-67; PP.779). Textual evidence that there can be arahats lacking mundane jhana is provided by the Susima Sutta (S.ii, 199-23) together with is commentaries. When the monks in the sutta are asked how they can be arahats without possessing supernormal powers of the immaterial attainments, they reply: "We are liberated by wisdom" *(paññavimutta kho mayam).* The commentary glosses this reply thus: "We are contemplatives, dry-insight meditators, liberated by wisdom alone" *(Mayam nijjhanaka sukkhavipassaka paññamatten'eva vimutta ti,* SA.ii,117). The commentary also states that the Buddha gave his long disquisition on insight in the sutta "to show the arising of knowledge even without concentration" *(vina pi samadhimevam nanuppattidassanattham,* SA.ii,117). The subcommentary establishes the point by explaining "even without concentration" to mean "even without concentration previously accomplished reaching the mark of serenity" *(samathalakkhanappattam purimasiddhamvina pi samadhin ti),* adding that this is said in reference to one who makes insight his vehicle (ST.ii,125).

In contrast to the *paññavimutta* arahats, those arahats who are *ubhatobhagavimutta*enjoy a twofold liberation. Through their mastery over the formless attainments they are liberated from the material body *(rupakaya),* capable of dwelling in this very life in the meditations corresponding to the immaterial planes of existence; through their attainment of arahatship they are liberated from the mental body *(namakaya)*, presently free from all defilements and sure of final emancipation from future becoming. *Paññavimutta* arahats only possess the second of these two liberations.

The double liberation of the *ubhatobhagavimutta* arahant should not be confused with another double liberation frequently mentioned in the suttas in connection with arahatship. This second pair of liberations, called *cetovimutti paññavimutti*, "liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," is shared by all arahats. It appears in the stock passage descriptive of arahatship: "With the destruction of the cankers he here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge." That this twofold liberation belongs to *paññavimutta*arahats as well as those who are ubhatobhagavimutta is made clear by the Putta Sutta, where the stock passage is used for two types of arahats called the "white lotus recluse" and the "red lotus recluse":

How, monks, is a person a white lotus recluse *(samanapundarika)?* Here, monks, with the destruction of the cankers a monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. Yet he does not dwell experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, monks, a person is a white lotus recluse.

And how, monks, is a person a red lotus recluse *(samanapaduma)?* Here, monks, with the destruction of the cankers a monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. And he dwells experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, monks, a person is a red lotus recluse. (A.ii,87)

Since the description of these two types coincides with that of *paññavimutta* and *ubhatobhagavimutta* the two pairs may be identified, the white lotus recluse with the *paññavimutta*, the red lotus recluse with the *ubhatobhagavimutta.* Yet the *paññavimutta*arahant, while lacking the experience of the eight deliverances, still has both liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom.

When liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom are joined together and described as "cankerless" *(anasava),* they can be taken to indicate two aspects of the arahant's deliverance. Liberation of mind signifies the release of his mind from craving and its associated defilements, liberation by wisdom the release from ignorance: "With the fading away of lust there is liberation of mind, with the fading away of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom" (A.i,61). "As he sees and understands thus his mind is liberated from the canker of sensual desire, from the canker of existence, from the canker of ignorance" (M.i,183-84) — here release from the first two cankers can be understood as liberation of mind, release from the canker of ignorance as liberation by wisdom. In the commentaries "liberation of mind" is identified with the concentration factor in the fruition attainment of arahatship, "liberation by wisdom" with the wisdom factor.

Since every arahant reaches arahatship through the Noble Eightfold Path, he must have attained supramundane jhana in the form of right concentration, the eighth factor of the path, defined as the four jhanas. This jhana remains with him as the concentration of the fruition attainment of arahatship, which occurs at the level of supramundane jhana corresponding to that of his path. Thus he always stands in possession of at least the supramundane jhana of fruition, called the "cankerless liberation of mind." However, this consideration does not reflect back on his mundane attainments, requiring that every arahant possess mundane jhana.

Although early Buddhism acknowledges the possibility of a dry-visioned arahatship, the attitude prevails that jhanas are still desirable attributes in an arahant. They are of value not only prior to final attainment, as a foundation for insight, but retain their value even afterwards. The value of jhana in the stage of arahatship, when all spiritual training has been completed, is twofold. One concerns the arahant's inner experience, the other his outer significance as a representative of the Buddha's dispensation.

On the side of inner experience the jhanas are valued as providing the arahant with a "blissful dwelling here and now" *(ditthadhammasukhavihara).* The suttas often show arahats attaining to jhana and the Buddha himself declares the four jhanas to be figuratively a kind of Nibbana in this present life (A.iv.453-54). With respect to levels and factors there is no difference between the mundane jhanas of an arahant and those of a non-arahant. The difference concerns their function. For non-arahats the mundane jhanas constitute wholesome kamma; they are deeds with a potential to produce results, to precipitate rebirth in a corresponding realm of existence. But in the case of an arahant mundane jhana no longer generates kamma. Since he has eradicated ignorance and craving, the roots of kamma, his actions leave no residue; they have no capacity to generate results. For him the jhanic consciousness is a mere functional consciousness which comes and goes and once gone disappears without a trace.

The value of the jhanas, however, extends beyond the confines of the arahant's personal experience to testify to the spiritual efficacy of the Buddha's dispensation. The jhanas are regarded as ornamentations of the arahant, testimonies to the accomplishment of the spiritually perfect person and the effectiveness of the teaching he follows. A worthy monk is able to "gain at will without trouble or difficulty, the four jhanas pertaining to the higher consciousness, blissful dwellings here and now." This ability to gain the jhanas at will is a "quality that makes a monk an elder." When accompanied by several other spiritual accomplishments it is an essential quality of "a recluse who graces recluses" and of a monk who can move unobstructed in the four directions. Having ready access to the four jhanas makes an elder dear and agreeable, respected and esteemed by his fellow monks. Facility in gaining the jhanas is one of the eight qualities of a completely inspiring monk *(samantapasadika bhikkhu)* perfect in all respects; it is also one of the eleven foundations of faith *(saddha pada).* It is significant that in all these lists of qualities the last item is always the attainment of arahatship, "the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," showing that all desirable qualities in a bhikkhu culminate in arahatship.[31]

The higher the degree of his mastery over the meditative attainments, the higher the esteem in which an arahant monk is held and the more praiseworthy his achievement is considered. Thus the Buddha says of the *ubhatobhagavimutta* arahant: "There is no liberation in both ways higher and more excellent than this liberation in both ways"(D.ii,71).

The highest respect goes to those monks who possess not only liberation in both ways but the six abhiññas or "super-knowledges": the exercise of psychic powers, the divine ear, the ability to read the minds of others, the recollection of past lives, knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings, and knowledge of final liberation. The Buddha declares that a monk endowed with the six *abhiññas*, is worthy of gifts and hospitality, worthy of offerings and reverential salutations, a supreme field of merit for the world (A.iii,280-81). In the period after the Buddha's demise, what qualified a monk to give guidance to others was endowment with ten qualities: moral virtue, learning, contentment, mastery over the four jhanas, the five mundane *abhiññas* and attainment of the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom (M.iii,11-12). Perhaps it was because he was extolled by the Buddha for his facility in the meditative attainments and the *abhiññas* that the venerable Mahakassapa assumed the presidency of the first great Buddhist council held in Rajagaha after the Buddha's passing away.

The graduation in the veneration given to arahats on the basis of their mundane spiritual achievements implies something about the value system of early Buddhism that is not often recognized. It suggests that while final liberation may be the ultimate and most important value, it is not the sole value even in the spiritual domain. Alongside it, as embellishments rather than alternatives, stand mastery over the range of the mind and mastery over the sphere of the knowable. The first is accomplished by the attainment of the eight mundane jhanas, the second by the attainment of the *abhiññas*. Together, final liberation adorned with this twofold mastery is esteemed as the highest and most desirable way of actualizing the ultimate goal.

About the Author

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Notes

1. See for example, the Samaññaphala Sutta (D. 2), the Culahatthipadopama Sutta (M. 27),etc.

2. *Kamacchanda, byapada, thinamiddha, uddhaccakukkucca, vicikiccha.*

3. *Vitakka, vicara, piti, sukha, ekaggata.*

4. *Akasanañcayatana, viññanañcayatana, akincaññayatana, nevasaññanasaññayatana.*

5. See Narada, *A Manual of Abhidhamma, 4th ed.* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), pp.389, 395-96.

6. A full description of the fourfold purification of morality will be found in the *Visuddhimagga,* Chapter 1.

7. The following discussion is based on Vism.110-115; PP.112-118.

8. Buddhaghosa ascribes the passage he cites in support of the correspondence to the "Petaka," but it cannot be traced anywhere in the present Tipitaka, nor in the exegetical work named *Petakopadesa.*

9. The other two types of abandoning are by substitution of opposites *(tadangappahana),* which means the replacement of unwholesome states by wholesome ones specifically opposed to them, and abandoning by eradication *(samucchedappahana),* the

final destruction of defilements by the supramundane paths. See Vism.693-96;PP.812-16.

10.

Adapted from Nyanaponika Thera, *The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest* (Wheel No. 26). This booklet contains a full compilation of texts on the hindrances.

11.

Ven Ñanamoli, in his translation of the *Visuddhimagga*, renders piti by "happiness," but this rendering can be misleading since most translators use "happiness" as a rendering for sukha, the pleasurable feeling present in the jhana. We will render piti by "rapture," thus maintaining the connection of the term with ecstatic meditative experience.

12.

Shwe Zan Aung, *Compendium of Philosophy* (London: Pali Text Society, 1960), p243.

13.

Khuddhikapiti, khanikapiti, okkantikapiti, ubbega piti and *pharana piti.* Vism 143-44; PP. 149-51. Dhs.A.158.

14.

Dhs.A.160-61. Translation by Maung Tin, *The Expositor (Atthasalini)* (London: Pali Text Society, 1921), i.155-56.

15.

The following is based on Vism. 126-35; PP.132-40

16.

Avajjanavasi, samapajjanavasi, adhitthanavasi, vutthanavasi, paccavekkhanavasi. For a discussion see Vism. 154-55; PP.160-61. The canonical source for the five masteries is the *Patisambhidamagga,* i.100.

17.

Based on the distinction between applied and sustained thought, the Abhidhamma presents a fivefold division of the jhanas obtained by recognizing the sequential rather than simultaneous elimination of the two kinds of thought. On this account a meditator of duller faculties eliminates applied thought first and attains a second jhana with four factors including sustained thought, and a third jhana identical with the second jhana of the fourfold scheme. In contrast a meditator of sharp faculties comprehends quickly the defects of both applied and sustained thought and so eliminates them both at once.

18.

Akasanañcayatana, viññanañcayatana, akincaññayatana, nevasaññana saññayatana.

19.

Brahmaparisajja brahmapurohita, maha brahma.

20.

Paritabha, appamanabha, abhassara.

21.

Parittasubha, appamanasubha, subhakinha.

22.

Vehapphala, asaññasatta, suddhavasa.

23.

A good summary of Buddhist cosmology and of the connection between kamma and planes of rebirth can be found in Narada, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*,pp.233-55.

24.

Anicca, dukkha, anatta.

25.

Dhs.A.259.See *Expositor*, ii.289-90.

26.

Dhs.A.274. See *Expositor*, ii.310.

27.

The cankers *(asava)* are four powerful defilements that sustain samsara; sensual desire, desire for existence, wrong views and ignorance.

28.

The *Visuddhimagga,* however says that arahats in whom faith is predominant can also be called "liberated by faith" (Vism.659; PP.770). Its commentary points out that this statement is intended only figuratively, in the sense that those arahats reach their goal after having been liberated by faith in the intermediate stages. Literally, they would be "liberated by wisdom". (Vism.T.ii,468)

29.

The first three emancipations are: one possessing material form sees material forms; one not perceiving material forms internally sees material forms externally; and one is released upon the idea of the beautiful. They are understood to be variations on the jhanas attained with color kasinas. For the attainment of cessation, see PP.824-833.

30.

It should be noted that the Kitagiri Sutta makes no provision in its typology for a disciple on the first path who gains the immaterial jhanas. Vism.T.(ii,466) holds that he would have to be considered either a faith-devotee or a truth-devotee, and at the final fruition would be one liberated in both ways.

31.

The references are to: A,ii,23; iii,131,135,114; iv,314-15; v,337.

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A Critical Analysis of the Jhanas

in Theravada Buddhist Meditation

Henepola Gunaratana

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A Critical Analysis of the Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation

by

Henepola Gunaratana

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This book is dedicated to my dear parents and teachers.

Bhante Gunaratana was born in 1927 in a small village in Sri Lanka and was ordained at the age of 12 as a Buddhist monk. At the age of 20 he was given higher ordination in Kandy in 1947. At the invitation of the Sasana Sevaka Society, Bhante Gunaratana went to the United States in 1968 to serve as Hon. General Secretary of the Buddhist Vihara Society of Washington, D.C. He has also pursued his scholarly interests by earning a B.A., an M.A., and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from The American University. He is the author of *Come and See*, *The Path of Serenity and Insight*, *The Jhanas* and *Mindfulness In Plain English*. Venerable Gunaratana is the abbot and the president of the Bhavana Society, a Forest Monastery and Retreat Centre in West Virginia, U.S.A.

A Critical Analysis of the Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation

by

Henepola Gunaratana

ABSTRACT

This work provides an analytical study of the *jhānas*, an important set of meditative attainments in the contemplative discipline of Theravāda Buddhism. Despite their frequent appearance in the texts, the exact role of the *jhānas* in the Buddhist path has not been settled with unanimity by Theravāda scholars, who are still divided over the question as to whether they are necessary for attaining nibbāna. The primary purpose of this dissertation is to determine the precise role of the *jhānas* in the Theravāda Buddhist presentation of the way to liberation.

For source material the work relies upon the three principal classes of authoritative Theravāda texts – the Pāli Tipiṭaka, its commentaries, and its sub-commentaries. To traditional canonical investigations modern methods of philosophical and psychological analysis are applied in order to clarify the meanings implicit in the original sources.

The examination covers two major areas: first the dynamics of *jhāna* attainment, and second, the function of the *jhānas* in realizing the ultimate goal of Buddhism, *nibbāna* or final liberation from suffering.

Regarding the first issue it is shown that Theravāda Buddhism treats the process of *jhāna* attainment from a philosophical perspective which views the mind as a complex of factors alterable by methodical training. The eight attainments of *jhāna* – four fine material *jhānas* and four immaterial *jhānas* – are examined individually in terms of their components and in their progressive scale of development. Also discussed are the supernormal powers of knowledge (*abhiññās*) resulting from *jhāna* and the connections between the *jhānas* and rebirth.

Regarding the second issue, the work brings to light several significant findings concerning the soteriological function of the *jhānas*. Fundamental to the conclusions in this area is the discovery that the Theravāda tradition distinguishes two kinds of *jhāna*, one mundane (*lokiya*), the other supramundane (*lokuttara*). Mundane *jhāna*, comprising

the eight attainments, belongs to the concentration group of the threefold Buddhist discipline – morality, concentration, and wisdom. Supramundane *jhāna* is the mental absorption immediately concomitant with the higher realizations called the supramundane paths and fruits, which issue from the full threefold discipline.

Theravāda Buddhism regards the mundane *jhāna* as neither sufficient nor indispensable for reaching liberation. They are insufficient as they only suppress the defilements and must be supplemented by wisdom. They are optional rather than indispensable since they need not be developed by all practitioners. Meditators belonging to the "vehicle of serenity" utilize *jhāna* to produce the concentration required as a basis for wisdom, meditators belonging to the "vehicle of bare insight" can employ a lower degree of concentration without achieving mundane *jhāna*. But supramundane *jhāna* pertains to the experience of all meditators who reach the paths and fruits, since these latter always occur at a level of *jhānic* absorption.

The dissertation also explains the two approaches to meditation and shows how they lead by stages to the higher realisations. The supramundane *jhānas* are examined analytically both in themselves and in comparison with their mundane counterparts. Also discussed are two additional attainments connected with the *jhānas* – fruition and cessation.

Finally, by means of a canonical sevenfold typology, the relation of the various grades of liberated individuals to the accomplishment of mundane *jhāna* is investigated. The conclusion emerges that though liberation from suffering, the ultimate goal of the discipline, is attainable by wisdom with or without mundane *jhāna*, Theravāda Buddhism places additional value on liberation when it is accompanied by mastery over the *jhānas* and skill in the modes of supernormal knowledge.

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PREFACE

The teaching of the Buddha is essentially a path leading to the cessation of suffering. Central to this path is the practice of meditation. Meditation may be considered the heart of applied Buddhism, to which all the preliminary stages of the path lead and out of which the higher stages flow. One of the most important aspects of Buddhist meditation is a set of attainments called, in Pāli, the *jhānas*. The *jhānas* are encountered repeatedly in the scriptural texts of early Buddhism. They were instrumental in the Buddha's own achievement of enlightenment and recurrently enter into the course of training he formulated for his disciples – in the stage of the path preparatory to the higher insights, in immediate association with the liberating wisdom, and again in the end as a spiritual endowment of the fully liberated man.

It is the purpose of the present work to examine the *jhānas* in order to determine their role in the Buddhist spiritual discipline. The perspective from which they are viewed is that of Theravāda Buddhism, the Buddhist school to which the author belongs as a fully ordained monk. Theravāda Buddhism is probably the oldest continuous Buddhist tradition, maintaining the most accurate record of what the Buddha himself actually taught. Theravāda Buddhist meditation, inclusive of the *jhānas*, has been reliably treated by several contemporary writers of scholarly stature. The present work, however, approaches the *jhānas* from a different angle. Whereas most scholars deal principally with the topics of meditation and only incidentally with the *jhānas* themselves, in our dissertation we focus primarily upon the *jhānas* as they are in their own nature, treating the topics of meditation only in a summary way. Our approach is psychological and analytical, our intent to look into the inner constitution of the *jhānas*, lay bare their inner dynamics, and see how they contribute to the purification and liberation of mind which is the goal of the Buddhist discipline.

Our work draws principally upon the scriptures and exegetical literature of Theravāda Buddhism. These sources, composed almost entirely in Pāli, fall into three primary layers of differing degrees of authoritative weight. The first and most authoritative is the Pāli Canon. This is the Tipiṭaka – the three "baskets" or collections of scripture: the Vinayapiṭaka, the collection of monastic discipline; the Suttapiṭaka, the collection of the Buddha's discourses; and the Abhidhammapiṭaka, the collection of psycho-philosophical treatises. The texts in these collections belong to different chronological strata, but a good portion, particularly of the Vinaya and suttas, can be reasonably ascribed to the Buddha himself.

The Suttapitaka was the most useful of the three for our purposes. This collection is divided into five sections: the Dīgha Nikāya (long discourses), the Majjhima Nikāya (middle length discourses), the Saṃyutta Nikāya (topically related discourses), the Aṅguttara Nikāya (numerically arranged discourses), and the Khuddaka Nikāya (miscellaneous discourses). We have relied most heavily on the first four and parts of the fifth as being the most ancient parts of the Pāli Canon.

The Abhidhammapiṭaka gives the appearance of being a somewhat later scholastic attempt at systematization, but its teachings are fully consistent with the suttas and help shed light on many points requiring precise analysis and fine definition. We have found particularly helpful the first two books of the Abhidhamma, the Dhammasaṅgaṇi and the Vibhaṅga, which in conjunction with their commentaries clarify a number of knotty points concerning the *jhānas*. The difference between the suttas and the Abhidhamma is that between a practical pedagogical approach and a philosophically rigorous one. But the two standpoints are found to harmonize and to repeatedly illuminate each other.

The second layer of Pāli literature is the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*). The commentaries were composed for the purpose of elucidating the words of the Tipiṭaka and for drawing out their implications. Their origins go back to very ancient times but they were edited and cast into final standardized versions in the 5th century A.C. by the great Buddhist commentator Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, who came from India to Sri Lanka expressly for that purpose. Fundamental to the entire commentarial collection is Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa's own original work, the Visuddhimagga (Path of Purification), a massive masterpiece which orders the complex field of Buddhist meditation into an organic comprehensive whole.

The third class of Pāli texts we drew upon is the *Ṭīkās*. The *Ṭīkās* are subcommentaries, composed with three principal purposes in view: to elucidate difficult points in the commentaries, to explore important side issues, and to systematize still further the material of the Tipiṭaka. The most useful of these has been the great *Ṭīkā* to the *Visuddhimagga*, the *Mahāṭīkā* called *Paramatthamañjūsā*, composed by Ācariya Dhammapāla who lived in South India in the 6th century A.C. This same teacher is also the author of the *Ṭīkās* to the Dīgha Nikāya, the Majjhima Nikāya, and the Saṃyutta Nikāya.

For passages from the Suttapiṭaka we have principally relied upon the editions of the Pali Text Society. For the commentaries and subcommentaries we have used the editions of the Burmese Buddha Sāsana Samiti, which started its work in connection with the Sixth Buddhist Council held in Burma in 1956. Sinhalese and Devanāgari editions were also consulted when available. Our secondary sources were English and Sinhalese treatises relating to the subject. For the sake of easy cross-reference we refer to commentaries and subcommentaries by their full scriptural titles rather than by their individual names; e.g. we refer to the commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya as *Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* rather than as *Papañcasūdani*, to the *Ṭīkā* to the *Visuddhimagga* as *Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā* rather than as *Paramatthamañjūsā*, etc. Both names for commentarial works can be found in the list of abbreviations of works used.

Some words are called for concerning the translation of material from the original Pāli sources. Whenever a Pāli text was available in English we have consulted the translation, but in a large number of cases we have found the English renderings unsatisfactory, due either to inaccurate translation or to the use of archaic language. Therefore we have often preferred to give our own translations indicated by the phrase "writer's translation" (Wr. tr.). Fortunately this procedure was not necessary in the case of the *Visuddhimagga*, which has been excellently translated by the Venerable Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli under the title

The Path of Purification. In some instances, where we present a passage translated by another writer using different renderings for technical terms than those we prefer, we give either our own preference or the Pāli terms in brackets following the other's rendering; but where the context makes it clear what term is intended we leave the passage as it stands. In all cases of doctrinally important passages translated from the Pāli, by ourselves or others, we give the Pāli original below in the footnotes. For the convenience of the reader a Pāli-English Glossary is provided in the back giving our usual preferred renderings of technical terms connected with Buddhist meditation appearing in the text.

Footnote and bibliographical references to books published in Sri Lanka use "Ceylon" or "Sri Lanka," as indicated on the title page; the latter is used when no country is mentioned. The systems of transliteration used in citations of Pāli texts in the Sinhalese and Burmese scripts are based upon those used by the Pali Text Society.

Our sincere thanks are due to Professor David F. T. Rodier, Director of the Dissertation, Department of Philosophy and Religion, The American University, and to the other readers, Professor Charles S. J. White of The American University and Professor Cornelia Dimmitt of Georgetown University, for reading the dissertation and for making valuable suggestions. We are also sincerely grateful to the Venerable Dr. Bhikkhu Bodhi who made many very valuable suggestions and helped polish the style and structure of the work. Last but not least we must sincerely thank Dr. Hazel Marie Griffin for her kind hospitality and valuable suggestions in arranging the footnotes and bibliography.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The Doctrinal Context of Jhāna

In the discourses the Buddha says that just as in the great ocean there is but one taste, the taste of salt, so in his doctrine and discipline there is but one taste, the taste of freedom (*vimuttirasa*).[1] The taste of freedom that flavors the Buddha's doctrine and discipline is the taste of spiritual freedom and it is to the full experience of this taste that the entire teaching of the Buddha is directed. Spiritual freedom, from the Buddhist perspective, means freedom from suffering. The problem of suffering is the wellspring out of which the whole current of Buddhist teaching arises; freedom from suffering is the end towards which it moves. Thus the Buddha could say throughout his ministry: "Previously, monks, as also now I make known only suffering and the cessation of suffering."[2] (Wr. tr.).

This focal concern with the issue of suffering is evident from the formula of the four Noble Truths.[3] The doctrine of the Four Noble Truths deals entirely with the problem of suffering, looked at from four different angles. The first Noble Truth exposes the forms and the range of suffering. It shows suffering to be an inextricable ingredient of life itself, tied on the physical side to the vital processes of birth, aging, sickness and death, cropping up on the psychological side as sorrow, grief, dejection, and despair. Suffering, moreover, in the Buddha's picture of the world, becomes multiplied to infinite proportions due to the fact of rebirth. The cycle of pain and sorrow does not turn only once; for all but the enlightened it turns over and over through beginningless time in the form of *saṃsāra*, the round of repeated becoming.

---

[1] Richard Morris and E. Hardy, eds. *The Aṅguttara-Nikaya*. [Pt. 1: *Ekanipāta*, *Dukanipāta*, and *Tikanipāta*, edited by Richard Morris. 2d ed. Revised by A. K. Warder; pt. 2: *Catukka-Nipāta*, edited by Richard Morris; pt. 3: *Pañcaka-Nipāta and Chakka-Nipāta*, edited by E. Hardy; pt. 4: *Sattaka-Nipāta*, *Aṭṭhaka-Nipāta*, *and Navaka-Nipāta*, edited by E. Hardy; pt. 5: *Dasaka-Nipāta and Ekādasaka-Nipāta*, edited by E. Hardy; pt. 6: Indexes by Mabel Hunt; Revised and edited by C. A. F. Rhys Davids]. (Pali Text Society [Publications], vols. 10, 20, 35, 44, 46, 66. 6 vols. 1885-1910; reprint ed., London: Luzac & Co., 1956-67), 4:203 (hereafter cited as AN.).

[2] "Pubbe cāhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññapemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ." V. Trenckner and Robert Chalmers, eds., *The Majjhima-Nikāya*. [Vol. 1: edited by V. Trenckner; vols. 2-3: edited by Robert Chalmers; vol. 4: Index of Words, edited by Mrs. Rhys Davids]. (Pali Text Society [Publications], vols. 17, 39, 45, 47, 51, 99. 6 vols in 4, 1888-1925; reprint, 4 vols.; London: Luzac & Co., 1960-64) 1:140 (hereafter cited as MN.).

[3] Hermann Oldenberg, ed. *The Vinaya Piṭakam*: *One of the Principal Buddhist Holy Scriptures in the Pali Language*. (Pali Text Society [Publication Series], vols. 147-48, 160-62. 5 vols., London: Luzac & Co., 1879-1964), 1:10ff (hereafter cited as Vinp.).

Having exposed the range and modes of suffering in the First Noble Truth, in the remaining three the Buddha points out the cause of suffering, its cessation, and the way to its cessation. The cause is craving, the insatiable drive for enjoyment and existence that keeps the wheel of rebirths in constant motion. The cessation of suffering is the reversal of this genetic relation, the complete abandoning and destruction of craving. The way to the end of suffering is the middle way of ethical and mental training that avoids all extremes of conduct and views – the Noble Eightfold Path made up of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Whereas the first three truths provide the doctrinal perspective of the Buddha's teaching, the fourth truth, the truth of the path, prescribes its practical regimen. This regimen focusses upon personal experience. The Buddha does not come into our midst as a savior descended from on high. He comes as an enlightened teacher, a man who has found the way to the end of suffering and who points the way out to others. The path itself every man must follow for himself. It is each man's own delusions and defilements that chain him to the cycle of suffering, and again each man's own efforts at inner purification that pave the road to his deliverance. Since bondage ultimately springs from ignorance (*avijjā*) the key to liberation, for Buddhism, is found in wisdom (*paññā*), a wisdom which must be generated inwardly as an immediate personal understanding of the basic truths of existence. The Dhamma is *paccataṃ veditabbo viññūhi*, (to be realized by the wise within themselves).

It is because personal realization of truth is needed to reach the end of suffering that meditation assumes a position of such crucial importance in the Buddhist formulation of the liberating path. Meditation, for Buddhism, is the means of generating the inner understanding required for deliverance from suffering. Its diversity of techniques stems from the differences in the people to be taught, but its purpose and procedure is the same for all: to produce that purity of mind and clarity of vision needed for the liberating wisdom to arise.

The methods of meditation taught in the Pāli Buddhist tradition are based on the Buddha's own experience, forged by him in the course of his own quest for enlightenment. They are designed to re-create in the disciple who practices them the same essential discovery the Buddha himself made when he sat beneath the Bodhi tree – the discovery of the Four Noble Truths.

The various subjects and methods of meditation expounded in the Pāli scriptures divide into two inter-related systems. One is called the development of serenity (*samatha-bhāvanā*), the other the development of insight (*vipassanābhāvanā*). The former also goes under the name of the development of concentration (*samādhibhāvanā*), the latter under the name of the development of wisdom (*paññābhāvanā*). The practice of serenity-meditation aims at developing a calm, concentrated, unified state of consciousness as a means of experiencing inner peace and for generating wisdom. The practice of insight-meditation aims at gaining direct understanding of the real nature of phenomena. Of the two, the development of insight is regarded by Buddhism as the essential key to liberation, the direct antidote to the ignorance underlying bondage and suffering.

Whereas serenity-meditation is recognized as common to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist contemplative disciplines, insight meditation is held to be the unique discovery of the Buddha and an unparallelled feature of his path. However, because the growth of insight presupposes a certain degree of concentration (*samādhi*), and serenity-meditation serves to secure this concentration, the development of serenity claims an incontestable place in the Buddhist meditative process. Together the two types of meditation work to make the mind a fit instrument for enlightenment. With his mind unified by means of the development of serenity, made sharp and bright by the development of insight, the meditator can proceed unobstructed to reach the end of suffering.

Focal to both systems of meditation. though belonging inherently to the side of serenity, is a set of meditative attainments called the four *jhānas*. The Pāli word *jhāna* has been rendered by translators into English in various ways. The Venerable Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and I. B. Horner have used "meditation," which to us seems too general. T. W. Rhys Davids offers "rapture" and "ecstasy," which suggest a degree of elation and exuberance inappropriate to the higher *jhānas*. F. L. Woodward's "musing" is too weak and archaic, while Edward Conze's "trance" misleadingly implies a sub-normal state, quite the opposite of *jhāna*. The word "absorption," used by the Venerables Soma Thera, Nyānaponika Thera, and others, is the most suitable of the lot, but that is needed for the Pāli *appaṇā*, which includes the *jhānas* and corresponds closely to "absorption" in literal meaning. For obvious reasons, therefore, we prefer to leave the Pāli *jhāna* untranslated.

The *jhānas* themselves are states of deep mental unification characterized by a total immersion of the mind in its object. They result from the centering of the mind upon a single object with such a degree of attention that inner verbalization, the discursive function of thought, is arrested and eventually silenced, brought to a stop.

The members of the fourfold set of *jhānas* are named simply after their numerical position in the series: the first *jhāna*, the second *jhāna*, the third *jhāna*, and the fourth *jhāna*. The four appear repeatedly in the suttas described by a stock formula showing their process of attainment:

> Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu, quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.
>
> With the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought he enters and dwells in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration.
>
> With the fading away of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and discerning; and he experiences in his own person that happiness of which the noble ones say: 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful' – thus he enters and dwells in the third *jhāna*.

> With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.[1] (Wr. tr.).

As this passage indicates, the mind entering upon the *jhānas* draws inwardly more deeply into itself – away from the sense objects impinging on the senses from the external world, upwards to a level of heightened awareness, calm, and purity far surpassing that of discursive thought.

The Importance of *Jhāna*

The importance of the *jhānas* in the Buddhist path to deliverance can readily be gauged from the frequency with which they are mentioned throughout the suttas. The *jhānas* figure prominently both in the Buddha's own experience and in his exhortations to disciples. In his childhood, while attending an annual ploughing festival, the future Buddha spontaneously entered the first *jhāna*. It was the memory of this childhood incident, many years later after his futile pursuit of austerities, that revealed to him the way to enlightenment during his period of deepest despondency.[2] After taking his seat on the banks of the Nerañjarā, the Buddha entered the four *jhānas* immediately before directing his mind to the threefold knowledge that issued in his enlightenment.[3] Throughout his active career the four *jhānas* remained "his heavenly dwelling" (*dibbavihāra*) to which he resorted in order to live happily here and now.[4] His understanding of the corruption, purification and emergence in the *jhānas*, liberations, concentrations, and meditative attainments is one of his ten powers which enable him to turn the matchless wheel of the Dhamma.[5] Just before his passing away the Buddha entered the eight attainments in direct and reverse order; the passing away itself took place directly from the fourth *jhāna*.[6]

The Buddha is constantly seen in the suttas encouraging his disciples to develop *jhāna*. The four *jhānas* are invariably included in the complete course of training laid down for disciples.[7] They figure in the training as the discipline of higher consciousness (*adhicittasikkhā*), right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) of the Noble Eightfold Path, and the faculty and power of concentration (*samādhindriya*, *samādhibala*). Though a vehicle of dry insight can be found, indications are that this path is not an easy one, lacking the aid of the powerful serenity available to the practitioner of *jhāna*. The way of the *jhāna* attainer seems by comparison smoother and more pleasurable.[1]

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[1] T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, eds., *The Dīgha-Nikāya*. [Vols. 1-2: edited by T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter; vol. 3: edited by J. Estlin Carpenter]. (Pali Text Society [Publications], vols. 22, 52, 67. 3 vols. 1880-1910; reprint, London: Luzac & Co., 1960-67), 2:314-15 (hereafter cited as DN.). MN. 1:182.

[2] MN. 1:246-47.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] DN. 3:220.

[5] MN. 1:68-83.

[6] DN. 2:156.

[7] DN. 1:47-86. MN. 1:175-84, 256-80

The Buddha points to the bliss of the *jhānas* as his alternative to sense pleasures. He says:

> There are, Cunda, four pursuits of pleasure which lead to ultimate disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, and *nibbāna*. Which four? Here, Cunda, secluded from sense pleasures, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*... the second *jhāna*... the third *jhāna*... the fourth *jhāna*.[2] (Wr. tr.).

His own disciples live devoted to these four pursuits of pleasure, and for them four fruits and benefits are to be expected, namely, attainment of the four stages of deliverance – stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahatship.[3] Just as the river Ganges slopes, inclines and flows to the east, a bhikkhu who develops and cultivates the four *jhānas* slopes, flows, and inclines to *nibbāna*.[4] The Buddha even refers to the four *jhānas* figuratively (*pariyāyena*) as a kind of *nibbāna*; he calls them immediately visible *nibbāna* (*sandiṭṭhikanibbāna*), final *nibbāna* (*parinibbāna*), a factor of *nibbāna* (*tadaṅganibbāna*), and *nibbāna* here and now (*diṭṭhadhammanibbāna*).[5]

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[1] AN. 2:150-52.

[2] "Cattāro'me Cunda sukhallikānuyogo ekanta-nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattanti. Katame cattāro? Idha Cunda bhikkhu vivicc'eva kāmehi… paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati… dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ… tatiyaṃ jhānaṃ… catutthaṃ jhānaṃ…" DN. 2:131-32.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] M. Léon Feer, ed. *The Saṃyutta-Nikāya of the Sutta-Piṭaka*. [Pts. 1-5: *Sagātha-Vagga*, *Nidāna-Vagga*, *Khandha-Vagga*, *Salāyatana-Vagga*, and *Mahā-Vagga*, edited by M. Léon Feer; pt. 6: Indexes, by Mrs. Rhys Davids], (Pali Text Society [Publications], vols, 8, 19, 25, 31, 42, 56. 6 vols. 1884-1904, reprint. London: Luzac & Co., 1960-70), 5:308 (hereafter cited as SN.).

[6] AN. 4:453-54.

Overview

Although the *jhānas* claim a place of such overriding importance in the Theravāda Buddhist system of meditation, works on Theravāda Buddhist meditation, beginning even with the commentaries, generally subordinate their accounts of the *jhānas* to the subjects of meditation intended to induce them. Thence the *jhānas* have received little detailed attention in their own right. The present work attempts to correct this deficiency by a close-up examination of the *jhānas* themselves. Our primary objective is to determine the precise role played by the *jhānas* in the Buddhist spiritual discipline directed to final deliverance from suffering. Since the *jhānas* have the immediate aim of producing a progressive purification of the mind, our handling of this general topic proceeds via the working out of solutions to two inter-connected problems. One is the question of how the *jhānas* bring about this purification of consciousness, the other the question of the way and the degree to which this purification contributes to the ultimate goal of Theravāda Buddhism, the attainment of *nibbāna*. Let us consider each of these in turn.

1. The solution to the first problem requires reference to the analytical and psychological standpoint of early Buddhist thought, prominent in all the strata of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. As is well known, Buddhism dispenses with the notion of an enduring self as a unifying principle of experience. Instead of positing a self-identical cognizer behind the workings of the mind, the Buddhist thinkers prefer to treat consciousness as a complex of mental factors coming together in momentary combinations. The *jhānas*, as states of consciousness, are therefore regarded in Theravāda Buddhism as congeries of evanescent factors. The task confronting us is to investigate this analytical approach to the understanding of the *jhānas*. We must see how these meditative states have been dissected into multiple components, scrutinize the internal relations obtaining between their factors, and determine how the *jhānas* link together to purify and refine the level of conscious awareness.

These issues are addressed principally in Chapters II through VI of our treatise. In these chapters we will see the attainment of *jhāna* to be a dynamic process by which the mind is gradually purified of its taints. In Chapter II we take a look at certain preliminaries which must be fulfilled as preparation for the practice of meditation. Then in Chapter III we turn to examine the process of *jhāna* attainment itself. The attainment of *jhāna*, we will see, starts with the elimination of the defilements obstructing mental collectedness, grouped together as the five hindrances, (*pañcanīvaraṇa*): sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.[1] In this chapter we will examine the five hindrances both collectively and individually, determine the extent to which they must be overcome as a prerequisite for entering the *jhānas*, and discuss the methods laid down in the Pāli texts for bringing about their elimination.

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[1] In Pāli: *Kāmacchanda*, *byāpāda*, *thīnamiddha*, *uddhaccakukkucca*, *vicikicchā.*

In Chapter IV we consider the first *jhāna* in terms of its positive factors of endowment. These are principally the five components – applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness[1] – called the *jhāna* factors because they lift the mind to the level of absorption and remain in the first *jhāna* as its defining constituents. The five factors will be examined individually in detail, then we will see how, together with the other mental phenomena present in the *jhāna*, they function to bring about the mind's absorption in its object.

After reaching the first *jhāna* the ardent meditator can go on to reach the higher *jhānas*. This is done by eliminating the coarser factors in each *jhāna*, those that remain being in each case the defining factors of the successive *jhānas*. In Chapter V we will explore at length the dynamics of this gradual purification of consciousness, discussing not only the *jhāna* factors present in each higher *jhāna* but also the new elements that come to prominence with the ascending refinement of awareness. Having discussed the higher *jhānas* and their factors, we will close this chapter with some remarks on the relation between the tetradic scheme of *jhānas* found in the suttas and a pentadic scheme found in the Abhidhamma.

Beyond the four *jhānas* lies another fourfold set of higher meditative states which deepen the element of serenity developed in the *jhānas*. These attainments, known as the immaterial states (*āruppā*) because they correspond ontologically to the immaterial realms of existence, are the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception.[2] In the Pāli commentaries this set comes to be called the four immaterial *jhānas* (*arūpajjhāna*), the four preceding stages being renamed, for the sake of clarity, the four fine material *jhānas* (*rūpajjhāna*). Often the two sets are joined together under the collective title of the eight *jhānas* or the eight attainments (*aṭṭha samāpattiyo*).

In the first part of Chapter VI we examine the immaterial *jhānas*, viewing them in terms of their internal structure and sequence of attainment. The second part of the chapter deals with certain super-normal powers of knowledge, called the *abhiññās*, that become available with the mastery of the eight *jhānas*. Then we close the chapter with some remarks on the cosmological implications of the *jhānas*, considered in connection with the doctrines of *kamma* and rebirth.

2. Since the refinement of consciousness produced by the *jhānas* is not pursued as an end in itself, but remains subordinated to the goal of liberation from suffering, the investigations of these early chapters lead directly into our second area of concern, the precise function the *jhānas* exercise in accomplishing the goal of the Buddhist path. The question whether or not the *jhānas* are needed to attain *nibbāna* is a problem which has long vexed scholars of Theravāda Buddhism. Some insist that they are absolutely necessary, others that they can be entirely dispensed with; both sides claim equal canonical support for their positions. The controversy has been further complicated by the recognition the Theravāda tradition gives to two approaches to the development of

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[1] In Pāli: *Vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggatā*.

[2] In Pāli: *Ākāsānañcāyatana*, *viññāṇañcāyatana*, *ākiñcaññāyatana*, *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*.

the path – one, the "vehicle of serenity" (*samathayāna*), emphasizing the attainment of the *jhānas*, the other, the "vehicle of insight" (*vipassanāyāna*), apparently de-emphasizing them. In the light of this distinction of vehicles it becomes incumbent upon us to determine exactly to what extent *jhāna* is required to fulfill the development of the path. We must clarify the differences between the two vehicles, show the different-kinds of *jhāna*, define the place of the *jhānas* in each vehicle, and explain why, to the extent that *jhāna* is not absolutely necessary, its attainment should still be regarded in Theravāda Buddhism as desirable and worthy of the effort required.

These issues will be dealt with principally in Chapters VII and VIII. The practice of serenity meditation, as we mentioned already, has the primary purpose of providing a basis for the development of wisdom, which alone has the power to actually eradicate the fetters.

In Chapter VII, therefore, we consider the nature of wisdom and its relation to the cultivation of the *jhānas*. We will here deal with the two vehicles of serenity and insight and the way concentration is developed in each. Then we will outline the seven stages of purification in terms of which the Theravāda tradition has ordered the successive stages of the path to liberation.

In Chapter VIII we turn to the relation between the *jhānas* and the higher attainments that result when wisdom reaches full maturity. Here we bring to the fore a distinction between two levels at which the *jhānas* can occur – the mundane (*lokiya*) and the supramundane (*lokuttara*). This distinction, we will see, is of paramount importance for resolving the controversy over the question as to whether or not the *jhānas* are needed for the attainment of deliverance.

Briefly, the mundane *jhānas* are states of deep concentration and serenity pertaining to the preliminary stage of the path, helping to provide the base of concentration needed for wisdom to arise. The supramundane *jhānas* are the levels of concentration pertaining to the four stages of enlightenment called the supramundane paths (*lokuttaramagga*) and to their consequent stages of deliverance resulting from them, the fruits (*phala*).[1] In this chapter we will explore in detail the differences between the two kinds of *jhāna* and the relations of both to the paths and fruits. Then we will take a look at two special higher meditative attainments – the attainment of fruition and the attainment of cessation – available only to noble persons standing on the higher planes of liberation. Finally we turn to another question long debated in Theravāda Buddhist circles – the extent to which the noble persons possess the *jhānas* in their mundane form. We will close our examination with some remarks on the place of the *jhānas* among the accomplishments of the arahat, the fully liberated man. This final discussion will enable us to evaluate the position assigned to the *jhānas* in the spiritual discipline of Theravāda Buddhism.

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[1] The four paths are the path of stream-entry (*sotāpattimagga*), the path of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmimagga*), the path of the non-returner (*anāgāmimagga*), and the path of arahatship (*arahattamagga*) they will be explained at length below. The fruits are named after their respective paths, i.e. the fruit of stream-entry, etc.

Etymology of Jhāna

The great Buddhist commentator Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa traces the Pāli word *jhāna* (Skt. *dhyāna*) to two verbal forms. One, the etymologically correct derivation, is the verb *jhāyati*, meaning to think or to meditate. Buddhaghosa explains: “By means of this yogins meditate, thus it is called *jhāna*... The meaning is that they cognize a given object.”[1] (Wr. tr.). The commentator offers in addition a more playful derivation of *jhāna*, intended to illuminate its function rather than its verbal source. This derivation traces the word *jhāna* to the verb *jhāpeti* meaning “to burn up”, the reason being: “It burns up opposing states, thus it is called *jhāna*.”[2] (Wr. tr.). The purport of this second account is that *jhāna* “burns up” or eliminates the mental obscurations preventing the development of serenity and insight. In this connection a later Pāli commentator, Ācariya Mahānāma, writes with specific reference to supramundane *jhāna*: “He who has this *jhāna* born in himself burns up the passions; thus he destroys and eradicates them” hence this state (*lokuttara jhāna*) is said to be *jhāna* in the sense of ‘to burn’.” [3]

Buddhaghosa says that *jhāna* has the characteristic mark of contemplation (*upanijjhānalakkhaṇa*). Contemplation, he states, is twofold: the contemplation of the object (*ārammaṇūpanijjhāna*) and the contemplation of the characteristics of phenomena (*lakkhaṇūpanijjhāna*). The former type of contemplation is exercised by the eight attainments of serenity together with their access, since these contemplate the object taken as the basis for developing concentration. For this reason these attainments, particularly the first four, are given the name “*jhāna*” in the mainstream of Pāli meditative exposition. However, Buddhaghosa also allows that the term can be extended loosely to insight, the paths, and the fruits, on the ground that these perform the work of contemplating the characteristics. The commentator explains:

> Here, insight contemplates the characteristics of impermanence, [suffering and selflessness]. Insight’s task of contemplation is perfected by the path, thus the path is called the contemplation of characteristics. The fruit contemplates the

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[1] “Iminā yogino jhāyanti ti pi jhānaṃ… gocaraṃ vā cittentī ti attho.” Buddhaghosa, [*Vinaya-Aṭṭhakathā* (*Samanta Pāsādika*)], [Vols. 1-2:] *Pārājikakaṇda Aṭṭhakathathā* [vol. 3:] *Pācityādi Aṭṭhakathā*; [vol. 4:] *Cuḷavaggādi Aṭṭhakathā*. [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 4 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1961), 1:116 (hereafter cited as Vin.A.).

[2] “Paccanikadhamme jhāpeti ti.” *Ibid.*

[3] *Saddhammappakāsanī*, cited in Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*: *A General Exposition According to the Pali Canon of the Theravāda School*, (Colombo, Ceylon: M. D. Gunasena & Co., 1962), pp. 24-25 (hereafter cited as BMTP.). “Ajātaṃ jhāpeti jhānena jhānaṃ tena pavuccati ti attano santāne pātubhūtena tena tena lokuttarajjhānena taṃ samaṅgipuggalo ajātameva taṃ taṃ kilesaṃ jhāpeti dahati samucchindati. Tena kāraṇena taṃ lokuttaraṃ jhānanti pavuccati ti attho.” Mahānāma, [*Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā Saddhammapakāsinī Nāma Paṭisambhidāmaggaṭṭhakathā*. [Pāli Text in Burmese script], 2 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1958), 1:257-58 (hereafter cited as Pts.A.).

> actual characteristic of cessation, thus it is called the contemplation of characteristics.[1] (Wr. tr.).

In brief the twofold meaning of *jhāna* as "contemplation" and "burning up" can be brought into connection with the meditative process as follows. By fixing his mind on the object the meditator reduces and eliminates the lower mental qualities such as the five hindrances and promotes the growth of the higher qualities such as the *jhāna* factors. These, as they emerge, fix upon the object with increasing force, leading the mind to complete absorption in the object. Then, by contemplating the characteristics of phenomena with insight, the meditator eventually reaches the supramundane *jhāna* of the four paths. With this *jhāna* he burns up the defilements and attains the liberating experience of the fruits.

Jhāna and Samādhi

In the vocabulary of Buddhist meditation the word *jhāna* is closely connected with another word, *samādhi*, generally rendered as "concentration." *Samādhi* derives from the prefixed verbal root *saṃ-ā-dhā*, meaning to collect or to bring together, thus suggesting the concentration or unification of the mind. The word *samādhi* is almost interchangeable with the word *samatha*, "serenity", though the latter comes from a different root, *sam* (Skt. *śam*), meaning "to become calm."

In the suttas *samādhi* is defined as mental one-pointedness, *cittass'ekaggatā*,[2] and this definition is followed through with technically psychological rigor in the Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma treats one-pointedness as a distinct mental factor (*cetasika*) present in every state of consciousness. It is a universal mental concomitant with the function of unifying the mind upon its object, ensuring that each state of consciousness takes one and only one object. Those occasions of one-pointedness which go beyond the bare stabilizing of the mind on an object to give the mind some degree of steadiness and non-distraction are subsumed under the name *samādhi*. Thus the Dhammasaṅgaṇi equates these more prominent types of one-pointedness with a string of synonyms inclusive of serenity (*samatha*), the faculty of concentration (*samādhindriya*), and the power of concentration (*samādhibala*). From this strict psychological standpoint *samādhi* can be present in unwholesome states of consciousness as well as in wholesome and neutral states. In the former it is called "wrong concentration" (*micchāsamādhi*), in the latter "right concentration" (*sammāsamādhi*).[3]

As a technical term in expositions on the practice of meditation, however, *samādhi* is limited to one-pointedness of the wholesome kind. Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, in the

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[1] "Ettha hi vipassanā aniccalakkhaṇādīni upanijjhāyati. Vipassanāya upanijjāyanakiccaṃ pana maggena sijjhatīti maggo lakkhaṇūpaniijhānanti vuccati. Phalaṃ pana nirodhassa tathalakkhaṇaṃ upanijjhāyatī ti lakkhaṇūpanijjhānanti vuccati." Vin.A. 1:116.

[2] MN. 1:301.

[3] *Dhammasaṅgaṇipāli*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script], (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1961), pp. 19, 92 (hereafter cited as Dhs.).

Visuddhimagga, defines *samādhi* as wholesome one-pointedness of mind (*kusala-cittass'ekaggatā*), and even here we can understand from the context that it is only the wholesome one-pointedness involved in the deliberate transmutation of the mind to a heightened level of calm that is intended by the word *samādhi*.[1] Buddhaghosa explains *samādhi* etymologically as "the centering of consciousness and consciousness concomitants evenly and rightly on a single object."[2] He calls it "the state in virtue of which consciousness and its concomitants remain evenly and rightly on a single object, undistracted and unscattered."[3]

Despite the preciseness of this definition, the word *samādhi* is used in the Pāli literature on meditation with varying degrees of specificity of meaning. In the narrowest sense, as defined by Buddhaghosa, it denotes the particular mental factor (*cetasika*) responsible for the concentrating of the mind, namely, one-pointedness. In a wider sense it can signify the states of unified consciousness that result from the strengthening of concentration, i.e. the meditative attainments of serenity and the stages leading up to them. And in a still wider sense the word *samādhi* can be applied to the method of practice used to produce and cultivate those refined states of concentration, here being equivalent to the development of serenity (*samathabhāvanā*).

It is in the second sense that *samādhi* and *jhāna* come closest in meaning, sharing to a large extent the same reference. The Buddha equates right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*) with the four *jhānas*, and in doing so allows concentration to encompass the meditative attainments signified by the *jhānas*. However, even though *jhāna* and *samādhi* can overlap in denotation, certain differences in their suggested and contextual meanings prevent unqualified identification of the two terms. Firstly, behind the Buddha's use of the *jhāna* formula to explain right concentration lies a more technical understanding of the terms. According to this understanding *samādhi* can be narrowed down in range to signify only one factor, the most prominent in the *jhāna*, namely one-pointedness, while the *jhāna* itself must be seen as encompassing the state of consciousness in its entirety, or at least the whole group of mental factors individuating that meditative state as a *jhāna*.

In the second place, when *samādhi* is considered in its broader meaning it involves a wider range of reference than *jhāna*. The Pāli exegetical tradition recognizes three levels of *samādhi*.[4] The first is preliminary concentration (*parikammasamādhi*), which is produced as a result of the novice meditator's initial efforts to focus his mind on his meditation subject. The second is access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*), marked by the suppression of the five hindrances, the manifestation of the *jhāna* factors, and the appearance of a luminous mental replica of the meditation object called the "counterpart sign" (*paṭibhāganimitta*). The third is absorption concentration (*appanāsamādhi*), the complete immersion of the mind in its object effected by the full maturation of the *jhāna* factors. Absorption concentration is equivalent to the eight attainments, the four *jhānas* and the four *āruppas*, and to this extent *jhāna* and *samādhi* coincide. However, *samādhi* still has a broader scope than *jhāna*, since it includes not only the *jhānas* themselves but also the two preparatory degrees of concentration leading up to them. Further, *samādhi* also covers a still different type of concentration called "momentary concentration" (*khaṇikasamādhi*), the mobile mental stablization produced in the course of insight-contemplation on the passing flow of phenomena.

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[1] Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*), translated from the Pāli by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli. (Colombo, Ceylon: R. Semage, 1956), p. 84 (hereafter cited as PP.).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 85. "Ekārammaṇe cittacetasikānaṃ samaṃ sammā ca ādhānaṃ." Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*, edited by Henry Clarke Warren, and revised by Dhammānanda Kosambi, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 41 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 68 (hereafter cited as Vism.).

[3] PP. p. 85. "Tasmā yassa dhammass'ānubhāvena ekarāmmaṇe cittacetasikā samaṃ sammā ca avikkhepamānā avippakinnā ca hutvā tiṭṭhanti, idaṃ samādhānanti veditabbaṃ." Vism., p. 68.

[4] Anuruddha, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, *Being Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Bhadanta Anuruddhā-cariya, edited in the Original Pali Text with English Translation and Explanatory Notes*, translated by Nārada Mahāthera. (Colombo, Ceylon: Vajirārāma, 1956. Rev. 3d ed. Kandy, Sri Lanka (Ceylon): Buddhist Publication Society, 1975) pp. 389, 395-96 (hereafter cited as Nārada, *Manual*).

Jhāna and the Constituents of Enlightenment

The principles of meditative training expounded by the Buddha during his teaching career were organized by him into seven basic categories comprising altogether thirty-seven partly identical factors. These factors are known as the thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*, "states pertaining to enlightenment" or "constituents of enlightenment". The seven categories among which they are distributed are: the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right endeavors, the four bases of success, the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, the seven enlightenment factors, and the Noble Eightfold Path.[1] The four *jhānas* enter either directly or implicitly into all these sets of training principles, and to appreciate their significance in the Buddhist discipline it will be of value to see how they do so. We will consider first the place of the *jhānas* in the Noble Eightfold Path, the most important and inclusive of the seven groups; then we will go on to note briefly their relation to the other sets.

The eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These eight are frequently divided into three broader categories: the group of moral discipline (*sīlakkhandha*), the group of concentration (*samādhikkhandha*) and the group of wisdom (*paññākkhandha*).[2] The group of moral discipline comprises the factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood; the group of concentration the factors of right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration; the group of wisdom the factors of right view and right intention. Though wisdom is seen as emerging fully only after concentration has been established its two factors are placed at the beginning of the path because a certain modicum of right understanding and right intentions are needed to embark upon the threefold discipline of morality, concentration and wisdom.

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[1] Note: the original Pāli names for these categories and their members can be found in Appendix 1.

[2] MN. 1:301. DN 2:291-315. MN. 3:71-78.

Of the three factors in the morality group, right speech is abstinence from false speech, slander, harsh speech, and idle talk; right action is abstinence from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; and right livelihood is avoiding a wrong means of earning one's living and following a righteous occupation. The Eightfold Path operates at the two levels previously referred to, at the mundane level in the preliminary stages of self-cultivation and at the supramundane level with the attainment of the four supramundane paths. This twofold modality of the path applies to each of its eight factors. The morality factors, considered in the Abhidhamma as three distinct *cetasikas* or mental concomitants, arise at the mundane level whenever a person deliberately abstains from some case of moral transgression. At the supramundane level the three factors occur simultaneously in the states of supramundane path-consciousness, performing the function of cutting off the tendencies towards their opposites.

The three factors of the concentration group also receive an analytical breakdown in the suttas. Right effort is explained as four right endeavors: the endeavor to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome mental states, to eliminate unwholesome states already arisen, to cultivate unarisen wholesome mental states, and to increase wholesome states already arisen. Right mindfulness consists in mindful contemplation of the four "foundations of mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*), namely, the body, feelings, states of mind, and mental objects. Right concentration is the unification of the mind into one-pointedness through the four *jhānas*. At the supramundane level right effort becomes the energy factor in the paths and fruits, right mindfulness the factor of attention, and right concentration the factor of mental unification. As we will see, according to the Theravāda commentators concentration in the mundane portion of practice need not be developed to the degree of the four *jhānas*. However, because the stronger the degree of concentration the stabler the basis for insight, the *jhānas* are still commended as guaranteeing the most reliable groundwork of mental calm. And when the supramundane paths and fruits are attained, consciousness occurs with a force of absorption tantamount to the four (or five) *jhānas*. Thence the *jhānas* are included as components of the Noble Eightfold Path, entering via the group of concentration.

Since the concentration group includes the three factors of right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, the question might arise about the exact inter-relationship of these factors. In the Cūḷavedalla Sutta the Bhikhunī Dhammadinnā states:

> The four foundations of mindfulness are the bases for concentration, the four right endeavors are the requisites for concentration, the repetition, development, and cultivation of those same states [i.e. mindfulness and effort] are the development of concentration.[1] (Wr. tr.).

The commentary to the sutta explains why the three factors are grouped together under the heading of the last member of the triad:

> Concentration cannot become absorbed in its object with one-pointedness entirely through its own nature. But it can do so when it gains the assistance of

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[1] "Cattāro satipaṭṭhānā samādhinimittā, cattāro sammappadhānā samādhiparikkhārā, yā tesaṃ yeva dhammānaṃ āsavanā bhāvanā bahulīkammaṃ ayaṃ tattha samādhibhāvanā ti." MN. 1:301.

> energy accomplishing its function of exertion and of mindfulness accomplishing its function of non-forgetfulness... Therefore concentration alone is included in the concentration group by virtue of its own genus; effort and mindfulness are included by virtue of their functions.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Concentration functions as a basis for wisdom. As the Buddha says: "Develop your concentration: for he who has concentration understands things according to their reality".[2] The wisdom group comprises the two factors of right view and right intention, the former being an equivalent term for wisdom proper, the latter its accompaniment. Right view is explained as the undistorted comprehension of the basic laws and truths structuring actuality. At the mundane level it consists in an understanding of the law of kamma, indicating the moral efficacy of action, as well as of the doctrinal contents of the Dhamma – the three characteristics, dependent arising, and the Four Noble Truths. At the supramundane level right view is the wisdom which directly penetrates the Four Noble Truths by "seeing" *nibbāna*, the unconditioned element. Right intention, its companion in this group, consists in thoughts of renunciation, of benevolence, and of non-injury. At the supramundane level right intention becomes the purified mental function free from lust, ill will, and cruelty, which directs the mind towards *nibbāna* and fixes it upon this object.

The three groups of path factors lock together as inter-related stages of training which work in harmony to accomplish the goal aspired to by the discipline, full liberation from suffering. From this angle the groups are designated the three training (*tisso sikkhā*). The morality group makes up the training in the higher morality (*adhisīlasikkhā*), the concentration group the training in the higher consciousness (*adhicittasikkhā*) and the wisdom group the training in the higher wisdom (*adhipaññāsikkhā*).[3] Each of these trainings arises in dependence on its predecessor and provides the support for its successor. Moral training provides the foundation for concentration, since mental composure can only be established when the coarser impulses towards ethical transgressions are controlled and restrained. Concentration provides the foundation for wisdom, since clear perception of the true nature of phenomena requires the purification and unification of the mind. Wisdom reaches its climax in the four paths and fruits, which uproot the subtlest strata of defilements and issue in final liberation from suffering.

From the Noble Eightfold Path we can now turn briefly to the other groups to see how *jhāna* fits in with their constituents of enlightenment. The four foundations of mindfulness and the four right endeavors are identical, respectively, with right mindfulness and right effort of the Eightfold Path. Insofar as these are called the bases (*nimitta*) and requisites (*parikkhāra*) for concentration, and concentration includes the four *jhānas*, *jhāna* can be seen to arise from the training in these two groups of principles. The four bases of success are the base of success consisting in zeal, the base consisting in energy, the base consisting in consciousness, and the base consisting in inquiry.[1] Since these four constituents of enlightenment are said to be supports for obtaining concentration, and to be directed towards the *abbhiññās* and the supramundane attainments, their connection with the *jhānas* is evident.[2] The five faculties and powers comprise the five identical factors – faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.[3] These are each classified as a faculty (*indriya*) in that they exercise dominance in a particular sphere of spiritual endeavor and as a power (*bala*) in that they cannot be shaken in confrontation with their opposites.[4] The faculty and power of concentration are said to be found in the four *jhānas*.[5] The seven enlightenment factors are mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.[6] *Jhāna* can be fitted into this group explicitly as the enlightenment factor of concentration; it is also closely associated with the factors of rapture, tranquility, and equanimity, which each rise to prominence in the course of developing the *jhānas*.

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[1] "Samādhi attano dhammatāya ārammaṇe ekaggabhāvena appetuṃ na sakkoti. Viriye pana paggahakiccaṃ sādhente satiyā ca apiḷāpanakiccaṃ sādhentiyā laddhūpakāro hutvā sakketi… tasmā samādhiyevattha sajātito samādhikkhandhena sangahito; vāyāmasatiyo pana kiriyato sangahitā honti." MN. 2:261.

[2] Nyanatiloka, Com., trans., *The Word of the Buddha*: *An Outline of the Teaching of the Buddha in the Words of the Pali Canon*, (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society. 1959), p. 93 (hereafter cited as *Word of the Buddha*). "Samadhim bhikkhave bhavetha. Samahito bhikkhave bhikkhu yathabhutam pajanati." SN. 3:13.

[3] AN. 1:235-36.

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[1] SN. 5:249-93.

[2] *Ibid*., 268.

[3] *Ibid*., 193-252.

[4] Dhs., pp. 162-67.

[5] SN. 5:196.

[6] *Ibid*., 63-140.

Chapter Two

THE PRELIMINARIES TO PRACTICE

The *jhānas* do not arise out of a void but in dependence on the right conditions. They are states of mind which can come to growth only when provided with the nutriments conducive to their development. Therefore, prior to beginning meditation, the aspirant to the *jhānas* must prepare a groundwork for his practice by fulfilling certain preliminary requirements. He first has to purify his moral virtue, since virtue forms the irreplaceable support for concentration. Then he must sever the outer impediments to practice and place himself under a qualified teacher. The teacher will assign him a suitable subject for developing *jhāna* and explain to him the methods of contemplation. After learning the methods the disciple must then seek out a congenial dwelling and diligently strive for success. In this chapter we will examine in order each of the preliminary steps which have to be fulfilled before commencing to develop *jhāna*.

The Moral Foundation for Jhāna

A disciple aspiring to the *jhānas* first has to lay a solid foundation of moral discipline. As the Buddha says;

> If a monk should wish 'May I be one who obtains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four *jhānas* pertaining to the higher consciousness, dwellings in happiness here and now' – he should fulfill the observance of moral discipline.[1] (Wr. tr.).

And again:

> For one who is morally corrupt, lacking moral discipline, right concentration is deprived of its supporting condition... But for one who is morally virtuous, endowed with moral discipline, right concentration possesses its supporting condition.[2] (Wr. tr.).

From these two statements we can see that any effort to develop *jhāna* in the absence of moral purity is doomed to failure, while when moral discipline is fulfilled the condition is laid for the practice to bear successful fruit.

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[1] "Ākaṅkheyya ce bhikkhave bhikkhu: catunnaṃ jhānānaṃ abhicetasikānaṃ diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihārānaṃ nikāmalābhī assaṃ akicchalābhī akasiralābhī ti – sīles'ev'assa paripūrakārī." MN. 1:33.

[2] "Dussīlassa bhikkhave sīlavipannassa hatūpaniso hoti sammāsamādhi… sīlavato bhikkhave sīlasampannassa upanisāsampanno hoti sammāsamādhi." AN. 3:19-20.

Moral purity is indispensable to meditative progress for several deeply psychological reasons. Firstly, moral purity is needed in order to safeguard against the danger of remorse (*vippaṭisāra*). Remorse is the nagging sense of guilt that crops up when the basic principles of morality are ignored or deliberately violated. When it arises it brings restlessness, anxiety, and self-reproach, which threaten to disrupt inner calm. Scrupulous conformity to virtuous rules of conduct protects the meditator from this obstacle to his practice. Therefore the Buddha states that wholesome moral principles (*kusalāni sīlāni*) have non-remorse as their benefit and reward, non-remorse has joy and rapture as its benefit and reward, and joy and rapture lead to a succession of purifying states culminating in concentration.[1]

A second reason necessitating a moral foundation for meditation follows from an understanding of the purpose of concentration. Concentration, in the Buddhist discipline, aims at providing a base for wisdom by cleansing the mind of the dispersive, distracting influence of the defilements. In order for the concentration exercises to effectively combat the defilements, the coarser expressions of the latter through the instruments of bodily and verbal action have to first be checked. Moral transgressions being invariably motivated by defilements – by greed, hatred, and delusion – when a person acts in violation of the precepts of morality he excites and reinforces the very same mental factors his practice of meditation is intended to eliminate. This involves him in a crossfire of incompatible aims which will render his attempts at mental purification ineffective. The only way he can avoid frustrating his endeavor to purify the mind of its subtler defilements is to prevent the unwholesome inner impulses from breaking out in the coarser form of unwholesome bodily and verbal deeds. Only when he establishes control over the outer expression of the defilements can he turn to deal with them inwardly as mental obsessions that appear in the process of meditation. But the relation of morality to concentration is not one-sided, for as meditation progresses it brings about in turn a greater purification of morality. As the meditator's mindfulness gains in sharpness and duration it brings to light more clearly the hidden springs of his behavior. This enables him to refrain from subtler types of bodily and verbal transgression and to aspire for more purified modes of conduct.

The practice of moral discipline consists, negatively, in abstinence from immoral actions of body and speech and, positively, in the observance of ethical principles of promoting peace within oneself and harmony in one's relations with others. The basic code of moral discipline taught by the Buddha for the guidance of his lay followers is the five precepts (*pañcasīla*): abstinence from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from intoxicating drugs and drinks. These principles are binding as minimal ethical obligations for all practitioners of the Buddhist path, and within their bounds considerable progress in meditation can be made. However, those aspiring to reach the higher levels of the *jhānas*, and to pursue the path further to the stages of liberation, are encouraged to take up the more complete moral discipline pertaining to the life of renunciation.

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[1] AN. 5:1-7.

Pāli Buddhism is unambiguous in its emphasis on the limitations of household life for following the path in its fullness and perfection. Householders can achieve proficiency in serenity and insight, and even reach the supramundane path and fruits. But by way of providing the conditions for leading the holy life the inadequacy of household existence as compared to the life of renunciation is clearly recognized.

Time and again the texts tell us of some householder or householder's son who, after gaining faith in the Buddha, begins to reflect:

> The household life is confining, a path for the dust of passion. The going forth into homelessness is like open space. It is not easy for one living at home to lead the fully complete, fully purified holy life, bright as a conch shell.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Then, following such reflections through, he takes up the course to which they point:

> Sometime later, having abandoned his stock of possessions, great or small, having left his circle of relations, great or small, he cuts off his hair and beard, puts on the yellow robes, and goes forth from home into the homeless life.[2] (Wr. tr.).

For those inclined to the homeless life of renunciation, Buddhism offers a supporting communal structure in the form of the Bhikkhu-sangha, the order of monks. After leaving the household life, therefore, the aspiring meditator, if he is free from impediments, will generally seek admission into the order, taking first the lower ordination of "going forth" (*pabbajjā*) which makes him a *sāmaṇera* or novice, then the higher ordination (*upasampadā*) which makes him a bhikkhu, a fully ordained monk. The monastic life, with its emphasis on purity, simplicity, and seclusion, was especially designed by the Buddha to establish the optimal outward conditions for inner progress in the practice of his teaching. The foundation for this practice is the training in the higher moral discipline. The moral training for bhikkhus has been shaped into a scheme called the fourfold purification of morality (*catupārisuddhisīla*), made up of four components:

1. the moral discipline of restraint according to the Pātimokkha;
2. the moral discipline of sense restraint;
3. the moral discipline of purity of livelihood; and
4. the moral discipline concerning the use of the requisites.[3] These provide a neat compendium of monastic ethics and a base for meditation.

1. The moral discipline of restraint according to the Pātimokkha (*pātimokkhasaṃvara-sīla*) consists in scrupulous observance of the rules of the Pātimokkha, the code of training precepts promulgated by the Buddha to regulate the conduct of the bhikkhus. The Buddha describes this aspect of moral discipline thus:

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[1] DN. 1:60ff. MN. 1:179ff.

[2] DN. 1:60ff. MN. 1:179ff.

[3] For a detailed treatment of the fourfold purification of morality see Vism., pp. 13-37; PP., pp. 16-46.

> Here a bhikkhu dwells restrained with the Pātimokkha restraint, possessed of the [proper] conduct and resort, and seeing fear in the slightest fault, he trains himself by undertaking the precepts of training.[1]

The Pātimokkha contains 227 rules incumbent upon all who receive full ordination into the Order. The rules provide the backbone of discipline for the monks. Careful adherence to them serves as the foundation of purified conduct needed to ensure success in contemplation.[2]

2. The moral discipline of sense restraint (*indriyasaṃvarasīla*) means exercising restraint over the sense faculties in their reactions to their objective fields. The canonical text reads:

> On seeing a visible object with the eye, he apprehends neither the signs nor the particulars through which if he left the eye faculty unguarded, evil and unprofitable states of covetousness and grief might invade him, he enters upon the way of its restraint, he guards the eye faculty, undertakes the restraint of the eye faculty.[3]

The same is repeated for the remaining sense faculties and their objects. The purpose of this training is to prevent sense experience from occasioning the rise of the defilements. Because the untrained mind apprehends sense objects through the "signs" or false notions that they are intrinsically attractive and repulsive, agreeable sights, sounds, odors, tastes, touches, and ideas tend to arouse craving and attachment, disagreeable ones to arouse aversion and grief. To conquer this dualistic pattern of emotional involvement, so detrimental to the nascent pool of calm forming within his mind, it is necessary for the aspiring meditator to guard his senses carefully in their encounter with objects. By means of vigilant mindfulness he has to ward off the spontaneous impulses to cling to the pleasant and reject the unpleasant, replacing them with a detached equanimity which can look upon all sense objects equally.

3. The moral discipline of purified livelihood (*ājīvapārisuddhi sīla*) requires that the meditator avoid a wrong means of livelihood. For a bhikkhu this stricture has an even more exacting application than the right livelihood binding on the laity. A bhikkhu intent on purified livelihood has to obtain his basic requisites – robes, food, lodgings, and medicines – only in ways consistent with the principles of the monastic life. He can obtain them either as alms offerings freely given by the laity or by making requests on

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[1] PP., p. 16. "ldha bhikkhu pātimokkhasaṃvarasaṃvuto viharati, ācāragocarasampanno anumattesu vajjesu bhayadassāvī, samādāya sikkhati sikkhāpadesu." *Vibhaṅgapāli*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script], (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1958), p. 253 (hereafter cited as Vibh.).

[2] A corresponding code of discipline containing about 350 rules was established for bhikkhunis, the original order of Buddhist nuns, but as the Bhikkhuni-sangha has become defunct this code no longer continues with its full force. However, there exist in Theravāda lands independently ordained nuns who do their best to live in accordance with the standards established by the original Pātimokkha for bhikkhunis.

[3] PP., p. 16. "So cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti nānubyañjanaggāhī, yatvādhikaraṇaṃ enaṃ cakkhundriyaṃ asaṃvutaṃ – viharantaṃ abhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvassāveyyuṃ, tassa saṃvarāya paṭipajjati, rakkhati cakkhundriyaṃ cakkhundriye saṃvaraṃ āpajjati." MN. 1;l80.

invitation from faithful supporters. It is strictly forbidden for a bhikkhu to put forth false claims to spiritual achievement as a way of bolstering his prestige in the eyes of the laity. He must also avoid resorting to such methods as scheming, persuasion, hinting, belittling, and so forth as ways of gaining his means of subsistence.

4. The moral discipline concerning the use of the requisites (*paccayasannissitasīla*) follows naturally upon purified livelihood. After obtaining his requisites by righteous means, the bhikkhu is enjoined to use them mindfully, cognizant of the real purpose they serve in the framework of the holy life. To help him maintain this understanding, certain formulas appropriate to each of the four supports – robes, alms-food, lodgings, and medicine – are set down in the texts as subjects for reflection. The standard formulas for these reflections are as follows:

> Reflecting wisely, he uses the robe only for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with gadflies, flies, wind, burning and creeping things, and only for the purpose of concealing the private parts. Reflecting wisely, he uses alms food neither for amusement nor for intoxication nor for smartening nor for embellishment, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for the ending of discomfort, and for assisting the life of purity: 'Thus I shall put a stop to old feelings and shall not arouse new feelings, and I shall be healthy and blameless and live in comfort.' Reflecting wisely, he uses the resting place only for the purpose of protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with gadflies, flies, wind, burning and creeping things, and only for the purpose of warding off the perils of climate and enjoying retreat. Reflecting wisely, he uses the requisite of medicine as cure for the sick only for protection from arisen hurtful feelings and for complete immunity from affliction.[1]

By using the requisites after making these reflections, the meditator can avoid the lure of craving for comfort and enjoyment. Recognizing the material supports of life to be subordinate in value to a spiritual goal, he is able to develop the virtues of contentment, frugality, and simplicity with regard to his physical requirements.

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[1] pp., p. 31. "Bhikkhu paṭisaṅkhā yoniso cīvaraṃ paṭisevati. Yāvad'eva sītassa paṭighātāya uṇhassa paṭighātāya ḍaṃsa makasa-vātātapa-siriṃsapa-samphassānaṃ paṭighātāya, yāvadeva hirikopīna-paṭicchādanatthaṃ. Paṭisaṃkhā yoniso piṇḍapātaṃ paṭisevati, n'eva davāya na madāya na maṇḍanāya na vibhūsanāya, yāvad'eva imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā yāpanāya vihiṃsūparatiyā brahmacariyānuggahāya: iti purāṇañ ca vedanaṃ paṭihaṅkhāmi navañ ca vedanaṃ na uppādessāmi yātra ca me bhavissati anavajjatā ca phāsuvihāro cāti. Paṭisaṅkhā yoniso senāsanaṃ paṭisevati, yāvad'eva sītassa paṭighātāya uṇhassa paṭighātāya ḍaṃsamakasa-vātātapa-siriṃsapasamphassānaṃ paṭighātāya, yāvad'eva utuparissayavinodanaṃ paṭisallānārāmatthaṃ. Paṭisaṅkhā yoniso gilānapaccaya bhesajjaparikkhāraṃ paṭisevati, yāvad'eva uppannānaṃ veyyābādhikānaṃ vedanānaṃ paṭighātāya abyāpajjhaparamatāya." MN. 1:10.

Cutting off Impediments

After establishing a basis of purified morality, the aspirant is advised to sever any outer impediments (*palibodha*) he may have that can hinder his efforts to lead a contemplative life. The *Visuddhimagga* enumerates these impediments as ten: a dwelling, family, gain, a class, building, travel, kin, affliction, books, and supernormal powers.[1]

1. A dwelling can be a single room, a hut, or a whole monastery. It becomes an impediment for those who allow their mind to become excessively pre-occupied with work and business connected with the dwelling, or with the belongings they have stored there. Meditation requires the abandonment of concern with the comforts and conveniences of residential life. Thus a meditator who finds his progress impeded by attachment to his dwelling is urged to relinquish it, and to seek a simple, secluded place of shelter where he can pursue his practice.

2. A family means either relatives or supporters. A disciple who lives in close association with lay devotees develops emotional bonds which hinder his progress. He is therefore advised to develop detachment towards them or to shift to a location where intimate involvements are unlikely to arise.

3. Gains are the four requisites. A bhikkhu who achieves fame and distinction may be frequently sought after by lay people to receive offerings of the requisites. To thank them he must recite blessings and preach the doctrine, thus finding no chance to practice meditation. In such a case he should cut off this impediment by leaving his group and wandering to a place where he is unknown.

4. A class is a group of students. A bhikkhu constantly engaged in instructing students has no time to undertake the work of contemplation. If he is intent on full time meditation he should turn his students over to another teacher and go off by himself.

5. Building means new building work. This is always an impediment, since it demands time and mental consideration. To sever this impediment the building work should be completed as soon as possible or handed over to the community of monks.

6. Travel is going on journeys. This should be relinquished in favor of a stable residence conducive to meditation.

7. Kin means specifically close fellows in the Order, such as teachers and pupils, and close relations such as mother and father, who are afflicted with illness. They should be nursed back to health as quickly as possible, or their care turned over to responsible persons.

8. Affliction is any kind of illness, which should be dealt with by taking the appropriate medicines or, if these fail, by persisting in the practice despite the illness.

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[1] PP., p. 91. "*Āvāso*, *kulaṃ*, *lābho*, *gaṇo*, *kammaṃ*, *addhānaṃ*, *ñāti*, *ābādho*, *gantho*, *iddhi*." Vism., p. 73.

9. Books means the study of scriptures. This is an impediment for those who find the intellectual work of study obstructive to their meditation. It should be severed by leaving off study and recitation during the period of intensified practice.

10. Supernormal powers are an impediment to insight, not concentration, since they are the products of concentration. As an impediment they can be cut off simply by neglecting to exercise them and by abandoning concern for their success.

Approaching the Good Friend

The path of practice leading to the *jhānas* is an arduous course involving specific subjects of contemplation, precise techniques, and skillfulness in dealing with the pitfalls that lie along the way. The knowledge of how to attain the *jhānas* has been transmitted through a lineage of teachers going back to the time of the Buddha himself. Each teacher passes his store of accumulated knowledge and experience on to his successor pupils, thus ensuring the continuity of the tradition. A prospective meditator is advised to avail himself of the living heritage of practice by placing himself under the care of a qualified teacher. The teacher will assign him a subject of meditation appropriate for his temperament, instruct him in the methods of developing it, and guide his steps along the path.

Unlike other Indian traditions, which focus upon the guru figure as an embodiment of divinity or a link between the disciple and the divine, Theravāda Buddhism has always stressed the pedagogic role of the teacher. This much is indicated by the term selected in the Pāli texts to designate the teacher of meditation, *kalyāṇamitta*, meaning "good (or noble) friend." The teacher is not the path or an incarnation of the divine, equipped with the means to deliverance in his own person. He is essentially an elder friend and guide, who gives guidance along the path he has travelled based on his superior wisdom gained through personal experience. Even the Buddhas themselves can do no more than indicate the path; the rest depends on the efforts of the aspirant.

Nevertheless, the importance of relying on a *kalyāṇamitta* is strongly emphasized in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. When the Venerable Ānanda approached the Buddha and declared that it seemed to him that reliance on good friends is half of the holy life, the Buddha corrected him with the words that reliance on good friends is the whole of the holy life, for it is reliance on good friends that leads to the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.[1] On another occasion, when his attendant Meghiya prematurely sought permission to go off into solitary retreat, the Buddha explained that while the mind is not yet ripe for liberation one thing that leads to its ripening is association with good friends and companions.[2] The Buddha in fact describes himself as the good friend par excellence who leads living beings to freedom from birth, aging, suffering, and death.[3]

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[1] SN. 1:88.

[2] AN. 4:354-58.

[3] SN. 1:88.

The good friend has the task of assigning the pupil a meditation subject. The *Visuddhimagga* points out that to do so the good friend must possess the proper qualifications, such as being worthy of reverence and esteem, uttering profound speech, and having solicitude for the welfare and progress of his disciples. It says that since the Buddha himself is the ideal good friend, while he is alive a meditation subject should be sought directly from him. But after the Buddha's passing the qualified meditation teachers that remain may be ranked in the following descending series: the great disciples that survive him, an arahat who attains *jhānas*, a non-returner, a once-returner, stream-enterer, an ordinary man who obtains *jhānas*, and various masters of the scriptures. After learning of a qualified teacher, the prospective meditator should approach him and take up residence in his monastery. He should not ask for a meditation subject immediately upon arriving, but should first perform the duties of a pupil towards the teacher, doing them with respect and humility. He should pay homage to the teacher in the evening and leave when dismissed. Then after ten days or two weeks have passed, he should create an opportunity to see the teacher. When all conditions are favorable, he can explain the reason for his coming. He should dedicate himself to the Buddha and to the teacher, then with a sincere inclination and resolution ask for a subject of meditation.[1]

The teacher assigns a meditation subject that is suitable for the disciple's temperament. The ancient teachers of the Theravāda tradition recognize six principal character types (*carita*) into which prospective meditators can be classified: These are: the greedy temperament, the hating temperament, the deluded temperament, the faithful temperament, the intelligent temperament, and the speculative temperament.[2] Which temperament prevails in a particular person is determined by previously accumulated *kamma*. On the basis either of the power of penetrating others' minds, or by personal observation, or by questioning, the teacher will size up the temperament of his new pupil; then he will select a meditation subject for him appropriate to his temperament.

The Subjects of Serenity-meditation

The various meditation subjects that the Buddha prescribed on different occasions for the development of serenity have been systematized in the commentaries into a set called the forty *kammaṭṭhānas*. The word *kammaṭṭhāna* means literally a place of work. It is applied to the subjects of meditation since these are the places where the meditator undertakes the work pertaining to his calling, the work of meditation. An equivalent term occurring in the texts in *ārammaṇa*, meaning "object" in general, but in this context the object focussed on in developing concentration.

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[1] PP., p. 100. Vism., p. 80.

[2] PP., p. 102. "*Rāgacarito*, *dosacarito*, *mohacarito*, *saddhācarito*, *buddhicarito*, *vitakkacarito*." Vism., p. 82.

The forty meditation subjects are distributed into seven categories. They are enumerated in the *Visuddhimagga* as follows: ten *kasiṇas*, ten kinds of foulness, ten recollections, four divine abidings, four immaterial states, one perception, and one defining.[1]

A *kasiṇa* is a device representing a particular quality used as a support for concentration. The ten *kasiṇas* are the earth *kasiṇa*, water *kasiṇa*, fire *kasiṇa*, wind *kasiṇa*, blue *kasiṇa*, yellow *kasiṇa*, red *kasiṇa*, white *kasiṇa*, light *kasiṇa*, and limited space *kasiṇa*. The word *kasiṇa* has the meaning of "entirety" (*sakalaṭṭhena*). It is extended to these ten objects of meditation in that each represents the entire quality appropriate to itself. As used in the manuals of meditation, a *kasiṇa* can signify any of three items: first the *maṇḍala*, the circle or other physical object used as the initial subject of concentration; second the *nimitta*, the mental image of the object obtained from repeated contemplation of the device; and third the *jhāna* that arises from meditation on the *nimitta*. Here *kasiṇa* is used to indicate principally the physical basis for concentration. This can be either a naturally occuring form of the element or color chosen, or an artificially produced device such as a colored or elemental disk that the meditator can use at his convenience in his meditation quarters.

The ten kinds of foulness are ten stages in the decomposition of a corpse. These are: the bloated, the livid, the festering, the cut-up, the gnawed, the scattered, the hacked and scattered, the bleeding, the worm-infested, and a skeleton. The primary purpose behind these meditations is to reduce sensual lust by gaining a clear perception of the repulsiveness of the body. In order to gain the "sign" of the corpses, actual dead bodies have to be seen. Thence these subjects are also known as the cemetery meditations.

The ten recollections are: the recollections of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, morality, generosity, and the deities, mindfulness of death, mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of breathing, and the recollection of peace. The first three are devotional contemplations on the sublime qualities of the "three jewels", the primary objects of Buddhist veneration. The second three are reflections on two cardinal Buddhist virtues and on the devas inhabiting the heavenly worlds, intended principally for those still intent on a higher rebirth. Mindfulness of death is reflection on the inevitability of death, a constant spur to spiritual exertion. Mindfulness of the body involves the mental dissection of the body into thirty-two parts, undertaken with a view to perceiving its unattractiveness. Mindfulness of breathing is awareness of the in-and-out movement of the breath, perhaps the most fundamental of all Buddhist meditation subjects. And the recollection of peace is reflection on the qualities of *nibbāna*.

The four divine abidings are the development of boundless loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. These meditations are also called the "immeasurables" (*appamaññā*) because they are to be developed towards all sentient beings without qualification or exclusiveness.

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[1] PP., p. 112. Vism., p. 89. The Pāli names for the forty *kammaṭṭhānas* are given in the Appendix 2.

The four immaterial states are the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception. These are the objects leading to the four corresponding meditative attainments called the imaterial *jhānas* (*arūpajjhāna*), immaterial deliverances (*āruppā vimokkhā*) or immaterial attainments (*arūpasamāpatti*).

The one perception is the perception of the repulsiveness of food. The one defining is the defining of the four elements, that is, the analysis of the physical body into the elemental modes of solidity, fluidity, heat, and oscillation.

The forty *kammaṭṭhānas* are treated in the Pāli commentarial texts from two important angles – one their ability to induce different levels of concentration, the other their suitability for different temperaments.

Not all meditation subjects are equally effective in inducing the deeper levels of concentration. As we explained above, beyond the preliminary stage of initial concentration (*parikammasamādhi*) concentration can occur either at the level of access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*) or at the level of absorption concentration (*appaṇāsamādhi*), depending upon the strength of the *jhāna* factors in the meditative state. Absorption too, consisting in the eight attainments – the four lower *jhānas* and the four *āruppas* – can occur at the different levels corresponding to these eight attainments. Therefore the forty *kammaṭṭhānas* are first distinguished on the basis of their capacity for inducing only access or for inducing full absorption as well; then those able to induce absorption are distinguished further according to their ability to induce the different levels of *jhāna*.

Of the forty subjects, ten are capable of leading only to access concentration. These are eight recollections – i.e., those excepting mindfulness of the body and mindfulness of breathing – plus the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment and the defining of the four elements. Cultivation of these subjects can cause the hindrances to subside and the *jhāna* factors to become manifest. However, because they are occupied with a diversity of qualities and involve an active application of discursive thought they cannot lead concentration beyond the stage of access. The other thirty subjects can all lead to absorption.

Of these latter, the ten *kasiṇas* and mindfulness of breathing bring all four *jhānas* their efficiency in this regard due apparently to their simplicity and freedom from thought construction. The ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body bring only the first *jhāna*, being limited because consciousness can only hold onto them with the aid of applied thought (*vitakka*), which is absent in the second and higher *jhānas*. The first three divine abidings can induce the lower three *jhānas* but not the fourth, since they arise in association with pleasant feeling (*sukha*), present in the first three *jhānas* but replaced by neutral feeling in the fourth. Conversely, because it requires the company of neutral feeling and cannot coexist with pleasant feeling, the divine abiding of equanimity occurs only at the level of the fourth *jhāna*, where neutral feeling gains ascendency. The four immaterial states conduce to the respective immaterial *jhānas* corresponding to their names; but because these latter are identical in factorial constitution with the fourth *jhāna*, differing only in their objects, the four immaterial states are said to lead to the fourth *jhāna*.

Since in the main section of the present work we wish to follow the progress of meditation through all four *jhānas*, we will presume the case of a meditator who has taken as his meditation-subject either a *kasiṇa* or mindfulness of breathing.

The forty *kammaṭṭhānas* are also differentiated according to their appropriateness for different character types. The principal temperaments recognized for this purpose are, as we said, six – the greedy, the hating, the deluded, the faithful, the intelligent, and the speculative. The danger of oversimplification involved in this scheme has been acknowledged by ancient teachers, and the possibility of complex combinations of traits finds ready affirmation. But the sixfold typology is taken to be sufficient as a pragmatic guideline for the purpose it is intended to serve, the assignment of a suitable subject to a meditator.

The *Visuddhimagga* divides the forty *kammaṭṭhānas* among the different temperaments as follows. The ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body, clearly intended to attenuate sensual desire, are eleven subjects suitable for those of greedy temperament. Eight subjects, the four divine abidings and four color *kasiṇas*, are appropriate for the hating temperament.[1] Mindfulness of breathing is one recollection suitable for those of the deluded and the speculative temperaments. The first six recollections are appropriate for the faithful temperament. Four subjects – mindfulness of death, the recollection of peace, the defining of the four elements, and the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment – are especially effective for those of intelligent temperament. The remaining six *kasiṇas* and the immaterial states are suitable for all kinds of temperaments. But the *kasiṇas* should be limited in size for one of speculative temperament and large in size for one of deluded temperament.[2]

Immediately after giving this breakdown Buddhaghosa adds a proviso to prevent misunderstanding. He states that this division by way of temperament is made on the basis of direct opposition and complete suitability, but actually there is no wholesome form of meditation that does not suppress the defilements and cultivate virtuous mental factors. He then cites a passage from the Meghiya Sutta advising a single meditator to meditate on foulness to abandon lust, on loving kindness to abandon hatred, on breathing to cut off discursive thought, and on impermanence to eliminate the conceit "I am".[3]

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[1] Exactly why the color *kasiṇas* are offered as an antidote to hatred is not explained. Perhaps the contemplation of color has a subtle psychological effect of reducing anger and aversion.

[2] PP., pp. 117-18. Vism., p. 92-93.

[3] PP., p. 118. AN. 4:358.

Choosing a Suitable Dwelling

The teacher assigns a meditation subject to his pupil appropriate to his character, and then explains the methods of developing it. He can teach it gradually to a pupil who is going to remain in close proximity to him, or in detail to one who will go to practice it elsewhere. If the disciple is not going to stay with his teacher he must be careful to select a suitable place for meditation. The *Visuddhimagga* mentions eighteen kinds of monasteries unfavorable to the development of *jhāna*: a large monastery, a new one, a dilapidated one, one near a road, one with a pond, leaves, flowers, or fruits, one sought after by many people, one in cities, among timber or fields, where people quarrel, in a port, in border lands, on a frontier, a haunted place, and one without access to a spiritual teacher.[1] Unless he is already highly developed a novice meditator should avoid a dwelling with these faults.

The factors which make a dwelling favorable to meditation are mentioned by the Buddha himself. These are five in number:

1. it should be not too far from or too near a village that can be relied on as an alms resort, and should have a clear path;
2. it should be quiet and secluded;
3. it should be free from inclemencies of weather and from harmful insects and animals;
4. it should be easy to obtain the four requisites while dwelling there; and
5. the dwelling should provide ready access to learned elders and spiritual friends who can be consulted when problems arise in meditation.[2] The types of dwelling places commended by the Buddha most frequently in the suttas as conducive to the *jhānas* are a secluded dwelling in the forest, at the foot of a tree, on a mountain, in a cleft, in a cave, in a cemetery, on a wooded flatland, in the open air, or on a heap of straw.[3] Having found a suitable dwelling and settled there, the disciple should maintain scrupulous observance of the rules of discipline. He should be content with his simple requisites, exercise control over his sense faculties, be mindful and discerning in all activities and practice meditation diligently as he was instructed. It is at this point that he meets the first great challenge of his contemplative life, the battle with the five hindrances.

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[1] PP., p. 125. Vism., p. 99.

[2] PP., pp. 125-26. AN. 5:15.

[3] MN. 1:181, 269, 274.

Chapter Three

THE CONQUEST OF THE HINDRANCES

In the suttas the Buddha expounds the *jhānas* in a fourfold scheme, the members of which are called the first, second, third, and fourth *jhāna*. The qualified monk, after fulfilling the preliminary requirements and going off into solitude, passes in turn first from ordinary consciousness into the first *jhāna*, and then from the first *jhāna* into each of the succeeding *jhānas* culminating in the fourth. The attainment of any *jhāna* comes about through a two-sided process of development. On one side is the elimination of the factors obstructive to attaining the *jhāna*, on the other the acquisition of the factors producing its attainment. The former set is called its factors of abandonment (*pahānaṅgāni*), the latter its factors of possession (*samannāgataṅgāni*). In the case of the first *jhāna* the factors of abandonment are the five hindrances (*pañcanīvaraṇa*) and its factors of possession the basic five *jhāna* factors (*pañcajhānaṅgāni*). Both sets are spelled out in a passage ascribed to the venerable Sāriputta, the Buddha's chief disciple:

> Your reverence, in regard to the first meditation, five factors are abandoned, five are possessed: if a monk has entered on the first meditation, desire for sense pleasure is abandoned, malevolence is abandoned, sloth and torpor are abandoned, restlessness and worry are abandoned, and doubt is abandoned, but there is initial thought and discursive thought, rapture and joy and one-pointedness of mind. Thus, your reverence, in regard to the first meditation, five factors are abandoned, five factors are possessed.[1]

In this chapter we will focus upon the five hindrances, leaving a detailed consideration of the *jhāna* factors to the next chapter. The five hindrances comprise sensual desire (*kamācchanda*), ill will, (*byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhaccakukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). This group of five merits special attention because it is the principal classification the Buddha uses for the obstacles to meditative development. The defilements included in this group obstruct not only the first *jhāna*, but the entire thrust of man's aspiration for the purification and liberation of his mind. They stand like a wall between man's sensual and self directed thought-patterns and his drive towards higher development, preventing progress in the spheres of both serenity and insight.

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[1] I. B. Horner, trans. and ed., *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings* (*Majjhima-Nikāya*. [Vol. 1: *The First Fifty Discourses* (*mūlapaṇṇāsa*); vol. 2: *The Middle Fifty Discourses* (*majjhimapaṇṇāsa*); vol. 3: *The Final Fifty Discourses* (*uparipaṇṇāsa*)]. (Pali Text Society [Translation Series nos. 29-31]. 3 vols. 1954-59; Reprint. London: Luzac & Co., 1970). 1:354-55 (hereafter cited as MLS.). "Paṭhamaṃ kho āvuso jhānaṃ pañcaṅgavippahīnaṃ pañcaṅgasamannāgataṃ: Idh'āvuso paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ samāpannassa bhikkhuno kāmacchando pahīno hoti, byāpādo pahīno hoti, thīnamiddhaṃ pahīnaṃ hoti, uddhacakukkuccaṃ pahīnaṃ hoti, vicikicchā pahīnā hoti. Vitakko ca vattati, vicāro ca pīti ca sukhaṃ ca cittekaggatā ca. Paṭhamaṃ kho āvuso jhānaṃ evaṃ pañcaṅgavippahīnaṃ pañcaṅgasamannāgataṃ'ti." MN. 1:294-95.

We will begin this chapter with a look at the standard canonical description for the attainment of the first *jhāna*, which opens with an allusion to the hindrances. Then we will give a general overview of the five hindrances followed by a more specific account of each hindrance in turn. From here we will go on to examine the abandonment of the hindrances. This discussion will focus on the Buddha's systematic approach to the conquest of the hindrances, which views these defilements as originating from particular conditions and to be abandoned by the elimination of their conditions.

The Entrance to the Jhāna

The Buddha describes the attainment of the first *jhāna* with a standard formula recurring throughout the Pāli Canon. The formula runs as follows:

> Quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, he enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Examination of the formula reveals that it divides into two parts, one indicating the states which must be eliminated to attain the first *jhāna*, the other the states which accompany and define the *jhāna* itself. The elimination of obstructive states is covered by the expression "quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind" (*vivicc'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi*). The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* and the *Visuddhimagga* comment upon these expressions in almost identical terms, seeking to relate them to the five hindrances. The commentaries view the phrases "sense pleasures" and "unwholesome states" as an implicit reference to the hindrances, a quite legitimate position since the Buddha has often stressed the need to overcome the hindrances in order to enter the first *jhāna*.

Basing themselves upon the Niddesa and Vibhaṅga[2] the commentaries allow a twofold interpretation of "sense pleasures" (*kāmehi*). They can be understood in the present context either as objective sense pleasures (*vatthukāma*), i.e. enticing sense objects which arouse the desire for sensual enjoyment, or as the defilement of sense pleasures (*kilesakāma*), i.e. the subjective desire for sensual enjoyment itself. According to the commentator the phrase "quite secluded from sense pleasures" serves to show that to attain the first *jhāna* the yogin must remove himself from sense pleasures, the first hindrance and its objective basis. The need for such separation is dictated by two considerations: first by the fact that sense pleasures are the "enemy" or contrary opposite of the first *jhāna*, which cannot exist in their presence "just as lamplight cannot exist as long as darkness exists"; and second by the fact that sense pleasures have to be relinquished to reach the first *jhāna* "just as the near bank must be relinquished to reach the further bank."[1]

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[1] "Vivicc'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ piṭisukhaṃ paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati." MN. 1:89. Vibh., p. 245.

[2] *Mahā Niddesapāli*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script], (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1960), pp. 1-2 (hereafter cited as Nd.). Vibh., p. 256. PP., l46. Vism., p. 113.

If sense pleasures are understood objectively, then the phrase "unwholesome states" (*akusalādhamma*) is interpreted to mean all unwholesome states, inclusive of sensual desire. In such a case "seclusion from sense pleasures" will signify bodily seclusion (*kāyaviveka*), physical aloofness from contact with sensually provocative objects, and "seclusion from unwholesome states" will signify mental seclusion (*cittaviveka*), mental aloofness from obsession by defilements.[2] On the other hand, if sense pleasures are understood subjectively, they will be equated specifically with one hindrance, the hindrance of sensual desire; the unwholesome states will then be equated with all five hindrances, including sensual desire insofar as it, too, is unwholesome. But to avoid redundancy, the commentary says that when the first phrase is taken to indicate the hindrance of sensual desire, the second should be taken to indicate the remaining four hindrances. In both cases "seclusion" signifies mental seclusion through suppression of the defilements; the use of the plural, *kāmehi* and *dhammehi*, suggests the plurality of forms either class of obsessions can assume.[3]

The Five Hindrances: General Account

The five defilements which the Buddha designates as the five hindrances are, as we mentioned, sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. These five receive the name "hindrances" for the reason that they hinder and envelop the mind.[4]

They hinder and envelop the mind by obstructing the development of meditation in either of its two modes – the mode of serenity (*samatha bhāvanā*) and the mode of insight (*vipassanā bhāvanā*). Hence the Buddha calls the five hindrances "obstructions, hindrances, corruptions of the mind, weakeners of wisdom."[5] Again he says: "These five hindrances, monks, are causes of blindness, causes of loss of vision, causes of unknowing, opposed to wisdom, aligned with vexation, leading away from *nibbāna*."[1]

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[1] PP., p. 145. "Andhakāre sati padīpobhāso viya, tesaṃ pariccāgeneva c'assa adhigamo hoti, orimatīrapariccāgena parimatīrasseva." Vism., p. 113.

[2] PP., pp. 145-46. Vism., pp. 83-84.

[3] PP., p. 147. Vism., p. 114.

[4] "Cittaṃ nīvarenti pariyonandhantī ti nīvararanā." *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* [Pāli Text in Burmese script] (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1960), p. 91 (hereafter cited as Dhs.A.).

[5] C. A. F. Rhys Davids, and F. L. Woodward, trans. *The Book of the Kindred Sayings* (*Saṃyutta-Nikāya*) *or Grouped Suttas*. [Pt. 1: *Kindred Sayings with verses* (*Sagatha-Vagga*), translated by Mrs. Rhys Davids assisted by Sūriyagoda Sumaṅgala Thera; pt. 2: *The Nidāna Book* (*Nidāna-Vagga*), translated by Mrs. Rhys Davids assisted by F. L. Woodward; pt. 3: translated by F. L. Woodward and edited by Mrs. Rhys Davids; pt. 4: translated by F. L. Woodward with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids; pt. 5. (*Mahā-Vagga*), translated by F. L. Woodward with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids. (Pali Text Society Translation Series, vols. 7, 10, 13-15]. 5 vols. 1927-30; reprint. London: Luzac & Co., 1956-71), 5:79 (hereafter cited as KS.). "Āvaraṇā nīvaraṇā cetaso upakkilesā paññāya dubbalīkaraṇā." SN. 5:94.

In the suttas the Buddha offers two sets of similes to illustrate the detrimental effect of the hindrances. The first compares the five hindrances unabandoned in oneself to five types of calamity: sensual desire is like a debt, ill will like a disease, sloth and torpor like imprisonment, restlessness and worry like slavery, and doubt like being lost on a desert road. Release from the hindrances is to be seen as freedom from debt, good health, release from prison, emancipation from slavery, and arriving at a place of safety.[2] The second set of similes compares the hindrances to five kinds of impurities affecting a bowl of water, preventing a keen-sighted man from seeing his own reflection as it really is. The five impurities are appropriately paired off with the hindrances: sensual desire is like a bowl of water mixed with brightly colored paints, ill will like a bowl of boiling water, sloth and torpor like water covered by mossy plants, restlessness and worry like water blown into ripples by the wind, and doubt like muddy water.[3] Just as the keen-eyed man would not be able to see his reflection in these five kinds of water, so

> when one dwells with his mind obsessed and overwhelmed by sensual desire (ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt), without understanding as it is the escape from these arisen obsessions, then one does not know and see as it is one's own good, the good of others, or the good of both.[4] (Wr. tr.).

Because the five hindrances are the states especially obstructive to the first *jhāna* they are called the first *jhāna*'s "factors of abandoning" (*pahānaṅgāni*). The factors of abandonment are the states which have to be abandoned in order for the *jhāna* to arise.[5] But the singling out of these five factors should not be taken to imply that they are the only states antithetical to the first *jhāna* or the only defilements abandoned when the *jhāna* is attained. To forestall this suspicion Buddhaghosa points out, in his exegesis of the first *jhāna* formula, that the two phrases "secluded from sense pleasures" (*vivicc'eva kāmehi*) and "secluded from unwholesome states of mind" (*vivicca akusalehi dhammehi*) cover other categories of defilements besides the hindrances. Of the three unwholesome roots (*akusalamūla*), the first covers greed, the second hatred and delusion. Of the floods (*ogha*), bonds (*yoga*), cankers (*āsava*), clingings (*upādāna*), bodily ties (*gantha*), and fetters (*saṃyojana*), the first phrase covers the flood, bond, canker, and clinging of sensual desire, the bodily tie of covetousness, and the fetter of sensual desire; the second phrase covers the remaining members of these groups.

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[1] KS. 5:91. "Pañcime bhikkhave nīvaraṇā andhakaraṇā acakkhukaraṇā aññāṇakaraṇā paññānirodhikā vighātapakkhiyā anibbānasaṃvattanikā." SN. 5:97.

[2] DN. 1:71-73.

[3] SN. 5:121-24.

[4] "Yasmim samaye kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati kāmarāgaparetena. Uppannassa ca kāmarāgassa nissaraṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti, attatthaṃ pi tasmiṃ samaye yathābhūtaṃ na jānāti na passati. Paratthaṃ pi, ubhayatthaṃ pi tasmiṃ samaye yathābhūtaṃ na jānāti na passati." SN. 5:121-22.

[5] PP., p. 152. Vism., p. 118.

Among the unwholesome states of consciousness mentioned in the Abhidhamma, the first phrase indicates the eight classes of consciousness rooted in greed, the second the remaining four classes of unwholesome cousciousness – those rooted in aversion and strong delusion.[1]

Nevertheless, despite this diversity of defilements opposed to the first *jhāna*, the five hindrances alone are called its factors of abandoning. The principal reason behind this selection, according to the *Visuddhimagga*, is that "although other unprofitable things too are abandoned at the moment of *jhāna*, still only these are specifically obstructive to *jhāna*."[2] Buddhaghosa goes on to show how each hindrance impedes the mind's capacity for concentration:

> The mind affected through lust by greed for varied objective fields does not become concentrated on an object consisting in unity, or being overwhelmed by lust, it does not enter on the way to abandoning the sense-desire element. When pestered by ill will towards an object, it does not occur uninterruptedly. When overcome by stiffness and torpor, it is unwieldy. When seized by agitation and worry, it is unquiet and buzzes about. When stricken by uncertainty, it fails to mount the way to accomplish the attainment of jhāna. So it is these only that are called factors of abandoning because they are specifically obstructive to jhāna.[3]

A second reason for confining the first *jhāna*'s factors of abandoning to the five hindrances is to permit a direct alignment to be made between the hindrances and the *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅgāni*). The *jhāna* factors are five mental phenomena which strengthen concentration and lift the mind to the level of *jhāna*. The five are applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). Since the five remain in the first *jhāna* they come to be called its "factors of possession" (*samannāgataṅgāni*). Buddhaghosa states that the abandonment of the five hindrances alone is mentioned in connection with *jhāna* for the reason that the hindrances are the direct enemies of the five factors:

> Only the hindrances are mentioned subsequently in the Vibhaṅga… in order to show their opposition to, and incompatibility with, the jhāna factors. For the hindrances are the contrary opposites of the jhāna factors: what is meant is

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[1] PP., p. 147. Vism., p. 114.

[2] PP., p. 152. Vism., p. 118.

[3] PP., p. 152. "Kāmacchandena hi nānāvisayapalobhitaṃ cittaṃ na ekattārammaṇe samādhiyati; kāmacchandābhibhūtaṃ vataṃ na kāmadhātuppahānāya paṭipadaṃ paṭipajjati; byāpādena c'ārammaṇe paṭihaññamānaṃ na nirantaraṃ pavattati; thīnamiddhābhibhūtaṃ akammaññaṃ hoti; uddhaccakukkuccaparetaṃ avūpasantaṃ eva hutvā paribbhamati; vicikicchāya upahataṃ jhānādhigama sādhikaṃ paṭipadaṃ narohati. Iti visesena jhānantarāyakarattā etān'eva pahānaṅgānī ti vuttāni." Vism., p. 118.

> that the jhāna factors are incompatible with them, eliminate them, abolish them.[1]

To support his contention the commentator cites a passage he ascribes to the Peṭaka demonstrating a one-to-one correspondence between the *jhāna* factors and hindrances:

> Concentration is incompatible with lust, happiness [rapture] with ill will, applied thought with stiffness and torpor, bliss [happiness] with agitation and worry, and sustained thought with uncertainty [doubt].[2]

Thus each *jhāna* factor is seen as being assigned the specific task of eliminating and abolishing a particular obstruction to the *jhāna*. To correlate these obstructions with the five *jhāna* factors they are ordered into a scheme of five hindrances.

The same principle also serves to explain the rationale behind the coupling that takes place in two of the hindrances, "sloth and torpor" and "restlessness and worry." In an important passage which anticipates the analytical precision of the Abhidhamma the Buddha demonstrates a method by which the five hindrances become tenfold. This is done by dividing three hindrances into two each according to whether they take internal or external objects, and the two compound hindrances into two each by way of their pairs of components:

> What, monks, is the method of explanation according to which the five hindrances become ten?
>
> Sensual desire towards the internal, monks – that is a hindrance; sensual desire towards the external – that is a hindrance. Thus the hindrance of sensual desire that comes down in the summary by this method becomes twofold.
>
> Ill will towards the internal, monks – that is a hindrance; ill will towards the external – that is a hindrance. Thus the hindrance of ill will that comes down in the summary by this method becomes twofold.
>
> Sloth, monks, is a hindrance; torpor is a hindrance. Thus the hindrance of sloth and torpor that comes down in the summary by this method becomes twofold.
>
> Restlessness, monks, is a hindrance; worry is a hindrance. Thus the hindrance of restlessness and worry that comes down in the summary by this method becomes twofold.

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[1] PP., p. 147. "Vibhaṅge upari jhānaṅgānaṃ paccanika-paṭipakkha-bhāvadassanato nīvaraṇā'eva vuttāni. Nīvaraṇāni hi jhānaṅgapaccani-kāni; tesaṃ jhānaṅgān'eva paṭipakkhāni viddhaṃsakāni vighātakānī ti vuttaṃ hoti." Vism., p. 114.

[2] PP., p. 147. "Samādhi kāmacchandassa paṭipakkho, pīti byāpādassa, vitakko thīnamiddhassa, sukhaṃ uddhaccakukkuccassa, vicāro vicikicchāya ti [ ] Peṭake vuttā." Vism., p. 114.

N.B. *The Path of Purification*'s "happiness" is our "rapture" (*pīti*), and *The Path of Purification*'s "bliss" is our "happiness" (*sukha*). The other differences in translation are more obvious, and can be checked in Appendix 3.

> Doubt towards internal phenomena, monks, is a hindrance; doubt towards externals is a hindrance. Thus the hindrance of doubt that comes down in the summary by this method becomes twofold.
>
> This, monks, is the method of explanation according to which the five hindrances are ten.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Thus when analyzed into distinct mental factors (*cetasika*) the five hindrances break down into seven separate states: sensual desire, ill will, sloth, torpor, restlessness, worry, and doubt. This raises the question why the seven defilements obstructive to the first *jhāna* are presented as only five hindrances rather than as seven. The reason for this peculiarity of arrangement again seems to lie in the economy required to set the *jhāna*-factors and hindrances in direct opposition. Since there are five *jhāna* factors the defilements they oppose must likewise be five. Sloth and torpor on the one side, and restlessness and worry on the other, readily lend themselves to the required coupling. For sloth and torpor share the common feature of mental ailment or indisposition, the former of consciousness itself and the latter of its concomitants.[2] Restlessness and worry, likewise, share the common feature of agitating or disturbing the mind. Thus it is natural that a single *jhāna* factor should be capable of opposing and silencing the two hindrances in each set. According to the method cited in the *Visuddhimagga*, sloth and torpor are both countered by applied thought, restlessness and worry are both countered by happiness.[3] In this way the mutual exclusion of hindrances and *jhāna* factors becomes the ground for the grouping of the hindrances into a fivefold set.

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[1] “Katamo, ca bhikkhave pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma pañca nīvaraṇā dasa honti?

Yad api bhikkhave ajjhattaṃ kāmacchando tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Yad api bahiddhā kāmacchando tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Kāmacchandanīvaraṇaṃ ti iti hidaṃ uddesaṃ āgacchati, tadaminā petaṃ pariyāyena dvayaṃ hoti.

Yad api bhikkhave ajjhattaṃ byāpādo tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Yad api bahiddhā byāpādo tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Byāpādanīvaranaṃ ti iti hidaṃ uddesaṃ āgacchati. Tad aminā petaṃ pariyāyena dvayaṃ hoti.

Yad api bhikkhave thīnaṃ tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Yad api middhaṃ tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Thīnamiddhanīvaraṇaṃ ti iti hidaṃ uddesaṃ āgacchati. Tad aminā petaṃ pariyāyena dvayaṃ hoti.

Yad api bhikkhave uddhaccaṃ tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Yad api kukkuccaṃ tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Uddhacca kukkucca nīvaraṇanti iti hidaṃ uddesaṃ āgacchati. Tad aminā petaṃ pariyāyena dvayaṃ hoti.

Yad api bhikkhave ajjhattaṃ dhammesu vicikicchā tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Yad api bahiddhā dhammesu vicikicchā tad api nīvaraṇaṃ. Vicikicchānīvaraṇaṃ ti iti hidaṃ uddesaṃ āgacchati. Tad aminā petaṃ pariyāyena dvayaṃ hoti.

Ayaṃ kho bhikkhave pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma pañca nīvaraṇā dasa honti.” SN. 5:110.

[2] “Thīnaṃ citta gelaññaṃ, middhaṃ cetasikagelaññaṃ.” Buddhaghosa, (*Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* (*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*)]. [Vol. 1:] *Sīlakkhandhavaggaṭṭhakathā*; [vol. 2:] *Mahāvaggaṭṭhakathā*; [vol. 3:] *Pāthikavaggaṭṭhakathā*. [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 3 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1968), 1:189 (hereafter cited as DN.A.).

[3] PP., p. 147. Vism., p. 114.

The Five Hindrances: Specific Account

Sensual Desire (kāmacchanda)

The hindrance of sensual desire is desire for sense pleasures, “sense pleasures” (*kāma*) here being equated with the “five strands of sense pleasures (*pañca kāmaguṇā*).[1] The five strands of sense pleasure are visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles which are “desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensuous, stimulating lust.”[2] (Wr. tr.). Desire for sense pleasures appears in the suttas under a variety of names. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi, the first book of the Abhidhamma-piṭaka, collects together all these names in its definition of the hindrance of sensual desire:

> That sensual desire, sensual passion, sensual delight, sensual craving, sensual fondness, sensual fever, sensual languishing, sensual rapacity which is excited by the pleasure of the senses – this is called the hindrance of sensual desire.[3]

This first hindrance thus coincides in meaning with the canker (*āsava*), flood (*ogha*), and bond (*yoga*) of sensuality, with the fetter of sensual lust (*kāmarāgasaṃyojana*), and with the clinging to sense pleasures (*kāmūpādāna*). Sensual desire is a form of the root-defilement of greed (*lobha*). The *Visuddhimagga* explains greed in terms of the four defining categories commonly found in the commentaries – characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause – with an illustration given as a fifth:

> Greed has the characteristic of grasping an object, like birdlime (lit. ‘monkey lime’). Its function is sticking, like meat put in a hot pan. It is manifested as not giving up, like the dye of lampblack. Its proximate cause is seeing enjoyment in things that lead to bondage. Swelling with the current of craving, it should be regarded as taking [beings] with it to states of loss, as a swift-flowing river does to the great ocean.[4]

Sensual desire is distinct in nature from other types of desire. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* differentiates it from the desire to accomplish some aim (*kattukamyatā*) as well as from the desire for Dhamma (*dhammacchanda*).[5] As a form of greed the first is invariably unwholesome, the second can assume both wholesome and unwholesome forms, the last is exclusively wholesome.

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[1] Dhs.A., p. 402.

[2] “Iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piyarūpā kāmupasaṃhitā rajanīyā.” MN. 1:85.

[3] Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, trans. *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics of the Fourth Century B. C. Being a translation*, *Now made for the First Time from the Original Pali of the First Book in the Abhidhamma Pitaka entitled Dhamma-Saṅgaṇi* (*Compendium of States of Phenomena*) *with Introductory Essay and Notes*, Oriental Translation Fund, New Series, vol. 12, (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1900), pp. 292-93 (hereafter cited as Psy.Ethics). “Yo kāmesu kāmacchando, kāmarāgo, kāmanandi, kāma taṇhā, kāmasineho, kāma pariḷāho, kāma mucchā, kāmajjhosanā, idaṃ vuccati kāmacchandanivaraṇaṃ.” Dhs., p. 232.

[4] PP., pp. 529-30. “Lobho ārammaṇagahaṇalakkhaṇo, makkaṭālepo viya; abhisaṅgaraso, taṭṭakapāle khittamaṅsapesi viya; apariccāgapaccupaṭṭhāno, telañjanarāgo viya; saṅyojanīyadhammesu assādadassanapadaṭṭhāno; taṇhānadībhāvena vaḍḍhamāno, sīghasotā nadī iva mahāsamuddaṃ, apāyaṃ eva gahetvā gacchattī ti daṭṭhabbo.” Vism., p. 396.

[5] Dhs.A., p. 402.

Ill will (byāpāda)

Ill will is used in the suttas as an equivalent for hatred (*dosa*) and aversion (*paṭigha*). All three signify resentment directed towards disagreeable persons or objects. Like the other defilements, ill will can either remain inwardly contained or can express itself outwardly. In the latter form it motivates actions such as killing, harsh speech, outbreaks of violence, etc. Thus we find that in the Potaliya Sutta the word *nivaraṇa* is given an extended meaning capable of covering the actions manifesting the internal hindrance: "This is indeed a fetter, this is a hindrance, that is to say onslaught on creatures… slanderous speech… angry fault-finding… wrathful rage."[1] Such actions become fetters and hindrances because they stir into activity the fetter and hindrance of ill will, reinforcing its detrimental influence upon moral and spiritual development.

The Dhammasaṅgaṇi defines the hindrance of ill will in its usual way by bringing together its numerous canonical synonyms:

> What is the hindrance of ill will? When annoyance springs up at the thought: 'He has done me harm, is doing, will do me harm; he has done harm, is doing harm, will do harm to someone dear and precious to me; he has conferred a benefit, is conferring, will confer a benefit on someone I dislike and object to; or when annoyance springs up groundlessly: all such vexation, indignation, hate, antipathy, abhorrence, mental disorder, detestation, anger, fuming, irascibility, hate, hating, hatred, disorder, getting upset, derangement, opposition, hostility, churlishness, abruptness, disgust of heart – this is called the hindrance of ill will.[2]

The *Visuddhimagga* explains hatred thus:

> It has the characteristic of savageness, like a provoked snake. Its function is to spread, like a drop of poison, or its function is to burn up its own support, like a forest fire. It is manifested as persecuting (*dusana*), like an enemy who has got his chance. Its proximate cause is the grounds for annoyance.[3]

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[1] MLS. 2:27. "Etadeva kho pana saṃyojanaṃ etaṃ nīvaraṇaṃ yadidaṃ pāṇātipāto… nindāroso… kodhūpāyāso…" MN. 1:361-64.

[2] *Psy. Ethics*, pp. 282-83. "Tattha katamaṃ byāpādanīvaraṇaṃ? 'Anatthaṃ me akarī'ti āghāto jāyati. 'Anatthaṃ me caratī'ti āghāto jāyati. 'Anatthaṃ me carissatī'ti āghāto jāyati. 'Piyassa me manāpassa anatthaṃ acarī'ti…, anatthaṃ caratī…, anatthaṃ carissatī' ti āgāto jāyati. 'Appiyassa me amanāpassa atthaṃ acari…, atthaṃ carati…, atthaṃ carissati'ti āghāto jāyati. Aṭṭhāne vā pana āghāto jāyati. Yo evarūpo cittassa āghāto paṭighāto paṭighaṃ paṭivirodho, kopo, pakopo. saṃpakopo, doso, padoso, sampadoso, cittassa byāpatti, manopadoso, kodho, kujjanā, kujjitattaṃ, doso, dussanā, dussitattaṃ, byāpatti, byāpajjanā, byāpajjitattaṃ, virodho, paṭivirodho, caṇdikkaṃ, asuropo, anattamanatā cittassa-idaṃ vuccati byāpādanīvaraṇaṃ." Dhs., p. 232.

[3] PP., p. 532. "So caṇḍikkalakkhaṇo pahaṭāsiviso viya, visappanaraso visanipāto viya, attano nissaya-dahanaraso vā dāvaggi viya, dusanapaccupaṭṭhāno laddhokāso viya sapatto, āghātavatthupadaṭṭhāno." Vism., p. 398.

Sloth and torpor (Thīnamiddha)

As we saw, the Buddha explains sloth and torpor as a compound hindrance which can be regarded as twofold in terms of its components. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi follows this suggestion through by breaking the compound down into its members and giving separate definitions of sloth (*thīna*) and of torpor (*middha*):

> What is the hindrance of stolidity [sloth] and torpor? First distinguish between stolidity [sloth] and torpor. In this connection, what is stolidity [sloth]? That which is indisposition, unwieldiness of intellect (citta) adhering and cohering, clinging, cleaving to, stickiness, stolidity [sloth], that is a stiffening, a rigidity of the intellect – this is called stolidity [sloth].
>
> What is torpor? That which is indisposition and unwieldiness of sense (lit. body), a shrouding, enveloping, barricading within, torpor that is sleep, drowsiness, sleep, slumbering, somnolence – this is called torpor.
>
> Now this is the stolidity [sloth] and this is the torpor which are called 'the hindrance of stolidity [sloth] and torpor'.[1]

When the Dhammasaṅgaṇi speaks of sloth as *cittassa akallatā akammaññata*, "indisposition and unwieldiness of intellect (or mind)", this should be understood to signify the incapacitation of the mind in its function as consciousness, the principal instrument of cognition. And when the text speaks of torpor as *kāyassa akallatā akammaññatā*, literally "indisposition and unwieldiness of the body," this should be understood to signify the incapacitation of the "mental body" (*nāmakāya*) made up of the mental factors (*cetasika*) concomitant with consciousness. Thence the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā*, in elucidating these definitions, equates *kāya* with the "mental body consisting of the three aggregates,"[2] i.e., the groups of feeling, perception, and mental formations. Thus sloth represents a state of inertia on the cognitive or intellective side of the mental process, torpor a corresponding condition on the affective, perceptual and volitional sides. The same point is brought out by the *Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā* when it glosses sloth as "a sickness of consciousness" and torpor as "a sickness of the mental factors" or "sickness of the three aggregates,"[3] (Wr. tr.) the mental factors being identical with the three mental aggregates – feeling, perception, and volition –

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[1] *Psy. Ethics* pp. 311-12. "Tattha katamaṃ thīnamiddhanīvaraṇaṃ? Atthi thīnaṃ, atthi middhaṃ. Tattha katamaṃ thīnaṃ? Yā cittassa akallatā, akammaññatā, oliyanā, sallīyanā, līnaṃ, līyanā, līyitattaṃ, thīnaṃ, thiyitā, thīyitattaṃ cittassa idaṃ vuccati thīnaṃ. Tattha katamaṃ middhaṃ? Yā kāyassa asallatā, akammaññatā, ānāho, pariyonāho, antosamorodho, middhaṃ, soppaṃ, pacalāyikā, soppaṃ, supanā, supitattaṃ, idaṃ vuccati middhaṃ. Iti idaṃ ca thīnaṃ, idaṃ ca middhaṃ. Idaṃ vuccati thīnamiddhanīvaraṇaṃ."

[2] Buddhaghosa, *The Expositor* (*Atthāsilinī*), *Buddhagosa's Commentary on the Dhammasangani, the First Book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. Translated by Pe Maung Tin. Revised and edited by C. A. Rhys Davids. Pali Text Society Translation Series, nos. 8, 9. 2 vols. (London: Luzac & Co., for the Pali Text Society, 1920-58), 2:485 (hereafter cited as *Expositor*. "Kāyassāti khandhattaya saṅkhātassa nāmakāyassa." Dhs.A., p. 409.

[3] "Thīnaṃ cittagelaññaṃ." DN.A. 1:189. "Middhaṃ cetasikagelaññaṃ; middhaṃ khandhattaya gelaññaṃ." *Ibid.*, 3:210.

co-existing with consciousness. Though the Dhammasaṅgaṇi defines torpor with a number of synonyms suggestive of physical sleep, its commentary takes pains to point out that what is intended as a hindrance is not the physical tiredness which necessitates sleep, but the indolence and mental obscuration which accompany sleepiness in the case of unliberated individuals.

The *Visuddhimagga* follows the lead of the suttas and Abhidhamma in also giving separate definitions of sloth and torpor consistent with those in the other commentaries:

> Herein, stiffness [sloth] has the characteristic of lack of driving power. Its function is to remove energy. It is manifested as subsiding. Torpor has the characteristic of unwieldiness. Its function is to smother. It is manifested as laziness, or it is manifested as nodding and sleep. The proximate cause of both is unwise attention to boredom, sloth, and so on.[1]

Restlessness and Worry (Uddhaccakukkucca)

As in the previous case, here too the Buddha divides this compound hindrance into its two components before recombining them into one: "Restlessness, monks, is a hindrance; worry is a hindrance. Thus the hindrance of restlessness and worry that comes down in the summary by this method becomes twofold."[2] The Dhammasaṅgaṇi again picks up on this method and defines the two terms separately:

> What is the hindrance of excitement [restlessness] and worry? What is excitement? That excitement of mind which is disquietude, agitation of heart, turmoil of mind: that is called excitement [restlessness].
>
> What is worry? Consciousness of what is lawful in something that is unlawful; consciousness of what is unlawful in something that is lawful; consciousness of what is immoral in something that is moral; consciousness of what is moral in something that is immoral: all this sort of worry, fidgeting, overscrupulousness, remorse of conscience, mental scarifying – this is what is called worry. Now this is excitement [restlessness] and this is the worry which are what is called 'the hindrance of excitement [restlessness] and worry.'[3]

The *Visuddhimagga* also gives separate treatment to restlessness and worry, explicating each in terms of the familiar defining categories. With regard to restlessness the treatise says:

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[1] PP., p. 530. "Tattha thinaṃ anussāhalakkhaṇaṃ, viriyavinodanarasaṃ, saṃsīdanapaccupaṭṭhānaṃ; middhaṃ akammaññatalakkhaṇaṃ, onahanarasaṃ, līnatāpaccupaṭṭhānaṃ, pacalāyikā-niddāpaccupaṭṭhānaṃ vā; ubhayaṃ pi arativijambhikādīsu ayoniso manasikārapadaṭṭhānaṃ." Vism., p. 397.

[2] See above, p. 64.

[3] *Psy. Ethics*, p. 312-13. "Tattha katamaṃ uddhaccakukkucca nīvaraṇaṃ? Tattha katamaṃ uddhaccaṃ? Yaṃ cittassa uddhaccaṃ avupasamo cetaso vikkhepo bhantattaṃ cittassa. Idaṃ vuccati uddhaccaṃ.

Tattha katamam kukkuccaṃ? Akappiye kappiya saññitā, kappiye akappiya saññitā, avajje vajja saññitā; vajje avajja saññitā; yaṃ evarupaṃ kukkuccaṃ kukkuccāyanā, cetaso vippaṭisāro, manovilekho, idaṃ vuccati kukkuccaṃ. Iti idaṃ ca uddhaccaṃ idaṃ ca kukkuccaṃ idaṃ vuccati uddhaccakukkuccanīvaraṇaṃ." Dhs., p. 233.

> It has the characteristic of disquiet, like water whipped by the wind. Its function is unsteadiness, like a flag or banner whipped by the wind. It is manifested as turmoil, like ashes flung up by pelting with stones. Its proximate cause is unwise attention to mental disquiet. It should be regarded as distraction of consciousness.[1]

Worry is explained in the following way:

> It has subsequent regret as its characteristic. Its function is to sorrow about what has and what has not been done. It is manifested as remorse. Its proximate cause is what has and what has not been done. It should be regarded as slavery".[2]

***Doubt* (*Vicikicchā*)**

The Buddha explains doubt as principally uncertainty and lack of conviction in regard to four items: the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, and the training.[3] Elsewhere he speaks of perplexity regarding the past, the present, and the future, and again about the removal of doubt in regard to dependent arising.[4] The Dhammasaṅgaṇi says:

> To doubt, to be perplexed about the Master… the Doctrine… the Order, about the Discipline, about the past, the future, about both the past and the future, as to whether there be an assignable cause of states causally determined – it is this kind of doubt, this working of doubt, this dubiety, puzzlement, perplexity, distraction, standing at cross-roads; collapses, uncertainty of grasp; evasion, hesitation, incapacity of grasping thoroughly, stiffness of mind, mental scarifying that is called perplexity [hindrance of doubt].[5]

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* explains that doubt in regard to the Master is doubt as to whether or not any person has existed endowed with the physical and spiritual qualities of a Buddha. Doubt regarding the Doctrine is doubt about the existence of the supramundane paths, fruits, and *nibbāna*. Doubt regarding the Sangha is skepticism with respect to the existence of holy persons or the fruitfulness of gifts to the Order. Doubt regarding the discipline questions the effectiveness of morality, concentration, and wisdom in leading to the end of suffering. Doubt regarding the past, future, and both applies to past lives, future lives, and both. And doubt regarding causally determined states is perplexity over the twelvefold formulation of dependent arising.[1]

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[1] PP., p. 530. "Taṃ avūpasamalakkhaṇaṃ, vātābhighātacalajalaṃ viya; anavaṭṭhānarasaṃ. Vātābhighātacaladhajapatākāviya; bhantattapaccupaṭṭhānaṃ, pāsāṇābhighātasamuddhatabhasmaṃ viya; cetaso avūpasame ayoniso manasikārapadaṭṭhānaṃ; cittavikkhepo, ti daṭṭhabbaṃ." Vism., p. 397.

[2] PP., p. 532. "Taṃ pacchānutāpalakkhaṇaṃ, katākatānusocanarasaṃ. Vippaṭisārapaccupaṭṭhānaṃ, katākatapadaṭṭhānaṃ, dāsabyaṃ iva daṭṭhabbaṃ." Vism., p. 398:

[3] MN. 1:101.

[4] *1bid*., pp. 8, 260.

[5] *Psy*. *Ethics*. p. 260. "Tattha katamaṃ vicikicchānīvaraṇaṃ? Satthari kaṅkhati vicikicchati; dhamme kaṅkhati vicikicchati; sanghe kaṅkhati vicikicchati; sikkhāya kaṅkhati vicikicchati; pubbante kaṅkhati vicikicchati; aparante kaṅkhati vicikicchati; pubbantāparante kaṅkhati vicikicchati; idappaccayatā paṭiccāsamuppannesu dhammesu kaṅkhati vicikicchati: sā evarūpā kaṅkhā kaṅkhāyanā kaṅkhāyitattaṃ, vimati, vicikicchā, dveḷhakaṃ, dvedhāpatho, saṃsayo, anekamsaggāho, āsappanā, parisappanā, apariyodahanā, thambhitatthaṃ, cittassa mano vilekho, idaṃ vuccati vicikicchānīvaraṇaṃ." Dhs., pp. 233-34.

It is evident from these definitions and descriptions that the species of doubt classed as a hindrance is skeptical indecision with respect to the fundamental tenets of Buddhist doctrine and practice. The doubt to be abandoned is not the freedom of philosophical inquiry, which the Buddha openly encouraged in those who sought to gain personal conviction of truth, but stubborn disbelief and perplexity regarding the principles needed for higher development. As long as such doubt persists, the mind is too obscured by confusion to embark on the path leading to higher attainments. As the *Visuddhimagga* says, doubt has the function of wavering, the manifestation of indecisiveness, and it acts as an obstruction to practice.[2]

Seclusion from the Hindrances

Kinds of Seclusion

The stock passage describing the attainment of the first *jhāna*, with which we began the present chapter, says that the *jhāna* is attained by a bhikkhu who is "secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind'.[3] Now that we have determined the purport of the phrase "unwholesome states of mind" to be the five hindrances, we must inquire into the meaning of the word "seclusion" (*viveka*). The *Visuddhimagga* in its gloss of this passage, explains that there are three kinds of seclusion relevant to the present context – namely, bodily seclusion (*kāyaviveka*), mental seclusion (*cittaviveka*), and seclusion by suppression (*vikkhambhanaviveka*).[4] These three terms allude to two distinct sets of exegetical categories, which must be considered to bring their meaning to light.

The first two terms pertain to a threefold arrangement made up of bodily seclusion, mental seclusion, and "seclusion from the substance" (*upadhi viveka*). The first means physical withdrawal from active social engagement into a condition of solitude for the purpose of devoting time and energy to spiritual development. The second, which generally presupposes success in the first, means the seclusion of the mind from its entanglement in defilements and distracted thoughts; it is in effect equivalent to *jhāna*, or at least the access level of concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). The third, "seclusion from the substance," is *nibbāna*, liberation from the elements of phenomenal existence.[5] The achievement of the first *jhāna* does not depend on the third, from which it is still quite remote, but it does require physical solitude and the separation of the mind from obsessions. Hence the *Visuddhimagga* mentions bodily and mental seclusion as pre-conditions for entering the *jhāna*, the former applying particularly to sense stimuli. the latter to the hindrances.

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[1] Dhs.A., pp. 388-89.

[2] PP., p. 533. Vism., p. 398.

[3] See p. 56.

[4] Vism., p. 113.

[5] MLS. 1:135. MN. 1:104.

The third type of seclusion pertinent to the context, seclusion by suppression, belongs to a different scheme generally discussed under the heading of "abandonment" (*pahāna*) rather than "seclusion." The basis for this classificatory set is a passage in the canonical exegetical work, the Paṭisambhidāmagga, recording five kinds of abandoning: "abandoning by suppression, by substitution of opposites, by cutting off, by tranquilization, and by deliverance."[1] (Wr. tr.).

The Paṭisambhidāmagga explains them as follows:

> For one developing the first *jhāna*, the hindrances are abandoned by way of suppression. For one developing concentration partaking of penetration, wrong views are abandoned by way of substitution of opposites. For one developing the supramundane path that leads to their destruction, (defilements) are abandoned by way of cutting off. At the moment of fruition they are abandoned by way of tranquillization. And abandoning by deliverance is *nibbāna*, cessation.[2] (Wr. tr.).

These five types of abandonment are elucidated more fully in the commentaries.

1. The *Visuddhimagga* says that "abandoning by suppression" occurs whenever "any of the mundane kinds of concentration suppresses opposing states such as the hindrances,"[3] as illustrated by the pressing down of water-weed by placing a porous pot on weedfilled water. Though the canonical text mentions only the first *jhāna* as an example, Buddhaghosa remarks that this is mentioned because suppression is obvious then, but suppression also occurs before and after the *jhāna*, when the hindrances do not invade consciousness by reason of the force of concentration.[4]

2. The "abandoning by substitution of opposites" is defined as

> the abandoning of any given state that ought to be abandoned through the means of a particular factor of knowledge, which as a constituent of insight is opposed to it, like the abandoning of darkness at night through the means of light.[5]

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[1] "Pañca pahānāni: vikkhambhanappahānaṃ, tadaṅgappahānaṃ, samucchedappahānaṃ, paṭippassaddhippahānaṃ, nissaraṇappahanaṃ." *Paṭisambhidamaggapāli* [Pāli Text in Burmese script], (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1962), p. 26 (hereafter cited as Pts.).

[2] "Vikkhambhanappahānā ca nīvaraṇānaṃ paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ bhāvayato, tadaṅgappahānā ca diṭṭhigatānaṃ nibbedhabhāgiyaṃ samādhi bhāvayato, samucchedappahānañ ca lokuttaraṃ khayagāmimaggaṃ bhāvayato, paṭippassaddhippahānañca phalakkhaṇe, nissaranappahānañca nirodho nibbānaṃ." *Ibid*., pp. 26-27.

[3] PP., p. 812. "Tena tena lokiyasamādhinā nīvaraṇādīnaṃ paccanikadhammānaṃ vikkhambhanaṃ, idaṃ vitkkhambhanappahānaṃ nāma." Vism., p. 596.

[4] PP., p. 812. Vism., p. 596.

[5] PP., p. 813. Vism., pp. 596-97.

This type of abandoning, in other words, represents a form of factor-substitution in which the arising of a particular species of insight-knowledge cancels out and vanquishes a corresponding kind of error. The *Visuddhimagga* cites as examples the abandoning of the perceptions of permanence, pleasure, and self through the contemplations of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, the principal forms of insight-knowledge.[1] Its commentary adds that insight is not the only type of abandoning by substitution of opposites, since the latter can also occur in other ways such as through the purification of morality, which replaces unwholesome states with wholesome ones.[2]

3. "Abandoning by cutting off" is a name for "the abandoning of the states beginning with the fetters by the noble path knowledge in such a way that they never occur again, like a tree struck by a thunderbolt."[3] This mode of abandoning comes about when the supramundane wisdom of the noble path consciousness eradicates the seeds or latencies of the defilements severing the possibility of their re-occurrence.

4. "'Abandoning by tranquillization' is the tranquillizing or subsiding of the defilements at the moments of 'fruition' following the noble path consciousness"[4] (Wr. tr.). It marks the release consequent upon the destruction of defilements effected by the path.

5. "'Abandoning by deliverance' is *nibbāna*, in which all that is conditioned is abandoned by deliverance from all that is conditioned."[5] (Wr. tr.).

Thus when the *Visuddhimagga* says that the achievement of the first *jhāna* is contingent on seclusion by suppression, we must understand this to mean that it requires the abandonment of the hindrances by way of the abandoning by suppression.

The Plane of Abandonment

The abandoning of the five hindrances is a necessary condition for the attainment of the first *jhāna*. The abandoning of the hindrances does not by itself necessarily indicate that the first *jhāna* has been achieved, but in order for the *jhāna* to be achieved the hindrances have to be abandoned. The type of abandoning relevant to the attainment of *jhāna* is abandoning by suppression. The suppression of the hindrances prepares the mind for entrance upon the *jhāna* by creating a situation conducive to its actualization. The *jhāna* and suppression can thus be understood to exist in a relationship where the arising of the *jhāna* is dependent on the prior suppression of the hindrances, and the persistence of the hindrances is obstructive to the attainment of the *jhāna*.

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] Dhammapāla, [*Visuddhimagga Mahā Tīkā*] *Paramatthamañjūsā Nāma Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā*. [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 2 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1960), 2:208-209 (hereafter cited as Vism.T.).

[3] PP., p. 816. "Yaṃ pana, asanivicakkhābhihatassa rukkhassa viya ariyamaggañāṇena saṃyojanādīnaṃ dhammānaṃ yathā na puna pavattanti evaṃ pahānaṃ, idaṃ samucchedappahānaṃ nāma." Vism., p. 598.

[4] "Yaṃ pana phalakkhaṇe paṭippassaddhattaṃ kilesānaṃ etaṃ paṭippassaddhippahānaṃ nāma." Buddhaghosa, [*Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* (*Papañcasūdanī*)], [Vol. 1-2] *Mūlapaṇṇāsaṭṭhakathā*; [vol. 3:] *Majjhimapaṇṇāsaṭṭhakathā*; [vol. 4:] *Uparipaṇṇāsaṭṭhakathā*. [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 4 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1957), 1:24-25 (hereafter cited as MN.A.).

[5] "Yaṃ sabbasaṅkhatanissaṭattā pahīnā sabbasankhataṃ nibbānaṃ etaṃ nissaraṇapahānaṃ nāma." *Ibid*., 25.

The work of suppressing the hindrances begins with the first efforts to focus the mind in concentration upon one of the prescribed objects for the development of *jhāna*, such as the *kasiṇas*. As the meditator fixes his mind on the initial object, a point is reached where he can apprehend the object as clearly with his eyes closed as with them open. This visualized object is called the "learning sign" (*uggahanimitta*).[1] As he concentrates on the learning sign, his efforts call into play certain mental factors intermittently present in normal consciousness but which now grow in force, duration, and prominence as a result of the meditative exertion. These mental factors activated by the preliminary work of concentration are applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). When they reach full maturity they will become the *jhāna*-factors, but in the preliminary stage of concentration they represent the *jhāna* only in embryonic form. These factors are incompatible with the hindrances and function as their precise antidotes. Thence their repeated cultivation excludes the hindrances, attenuates them, and holds them at bay. As the *Visuddhimagga* explains:

> The hindrances are the contrary opposites of the *jhāna* factors: what is meant is that the *jhāna* factors are incompatible with them, eliminate them, abolish them. And it is said accordingly in the Peṭaka: 'Concentration is incompatible with lust, happiness with ill will, applied thought with stiffness and torpor, bliss with agitation and worry, and sustained thought with uncertainty'.[2]

With continued practice the "learning sign" gives rise to a purified luminous reproduction of itself called the "counterpart sign" (*paṭibhāga nimitta*).[3] The manifestation of the counterpart sign marks the complete suppression of the hindrances and the attainment of a degree of concentration known as "access concentration" (*upacārasamādhi*): "But as soon as it (counterpart sign) arises the hindrances are quite suppressed, the defilements subside, and the mind becomes concentrated in access concentration."[4]

All three events – the suppression of the hindrances, the arising of the counterpart sign, and the entrance upon access concentration – take place at precisely the same moment, without interval. And though previously the process of mental cultivation may have required the elimination of different hindrances at different times, when access is achieved they all subside together:

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1. PP., p. 130. Vism., p. 101-102.

2. PP., p. 147. "Nīvaranāṇi hi jhānaṅgapaccanikāni; tesaṃ jhānaṅgāneva paṭipakkhāni viddhaṅsakāni vighātakāni ti vuttaṃ hoti. Tathā hi, 'samādhi kāmacchandassa paṭipakkho, pīti byāpādassa, vitakko thīnamiddhassa, sukhaṃ uddhaccakukkuccassa, vicāro vicikicchāyā'ti [ ] Peṭake vuttaṃ." Vism., p. 114.

3. PP., p. 130. Vism., p. 102.

4. PP., p. 131. "Uppannakālato ca pan'assa paṭṭhāya nīvaraṇāni vikkhambhitāni eva honti, kilesā sannisinnā vā, upacārasamādhinā cittaṃ samāhitaṃ evā ti." Vism., p. 102.

> Simultaneously with his acquiring the counterpart sign his lust is abandoned by suppression owing to his giving no attention externally to sense desires (as object). And owing to his abandoning of approval, ill will is abandoned too, as pus is with the abandoning of blood. Likewise stiffness and torpor is abandoned through exertion of energy, agitation and worry is abandoned through devotion to peaceful things that cause no remorse; and uncertainty about the Master who teaches the way, about the way, and about the fruit of the way, is abandoned through the actual experience of the distinction attained. So the five hindrances are abandoned.[1]

The term "access concentration" does not appear as such in the four main *nikāyas* of the Suttapiṭaka, but only in the commentaries. However, a state intermediate between normal consciousness and full concentration, in which the hindrances are overcome, is clearly implied by a number of passages. Thus in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta it is said:

> But when these five hindrances have been put away within him, he looks upon himself as freed from debt, rid of disease, out of jail, a free man, and secure.
>
> And gladness springs up within him on his realising that, and joy arises to him thus gladdened, and so rejoicing all his frame becomes at ease, and being thus at ease he is filled with a sense of peace and in that peace his heart is stayed.[2]

The state where the hindrances are abandoned but the mind has not yet become fully concentrated in the first *jhāna* seems to be the canonical paradigm for access concentration. Though the mental factors determinative of the *jhāna* are present in access concentration, they do not as yet possess sufficient strength to give this state the full qualification of the first *jhāna*. They are strong enough only to exclude the hindrances and hold them at bay. This preliminary state, as we said, is a necessary prelude to the attainment of *jhāna*, but does not itself possess a powerful enough degree of mental unification to actually place the mind in full absorption. With continued practice, however, the nascent *jhāna* factors will grow in strength until they gain sufficient force to issue in the first *jhāna*.

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1. PP., p. 196. "Tassa paṭibhāganimittapaṭilābhasamakālaṃ eva, bahiddhā kāmānaṃ amanasikārā vikkhambhanavasena kāmacchando pahīyati; anunayappahānen'eva'assa lohitappahānena pubbo viya byāpādo pi pahīyati; tathā āraddhaviriyatāya thīnamiddhaṃ avippaṭisārakarasantadhammānuyogavasena uddhaccakukkuccaṃ, adhigatavisesassa paccakkhatāya paṭipattidesake Satthari paṭipattiyaṃ paṭipattiphale ca vicikicchā'ti pañca nivaraṇāni pahīyanti." Vism., p. 155.

2. T. W. Rhys Davids and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, trans. *Dialogues of the Buddha* (*Dīgha Nikāya*). [Vol. 1: translated by T. W. Rhys Davids; vols. 2-3: translated by T. W. Rhys Davids and C. A. F. Rhys Davids. (Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vols. 2-4]. 3 vols. 1889-1921; reprint, London: Luzac & Co., 1956-77), 1;84 (hereafter cited as Dial.). "Seyyathā pi mahā rāja ānanyaṃ yathā ārogyaṃ yathā bandhanā mokkhaṃ yathā bhujissaṃ yathā khemanta bhūmiṃ, evaṃ eva kho mahā-rāja bhikkhu ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassati.

Tassa ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassato pāmujjaṃ jāyati, pamuditassa pīti jāyati, pītimanassa kāyo passambhati, passaddha kāyo sukhaṃ vedeti, sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati." DN. 1:72.

Thus, beginning from the ordinary distracted condition of the untrained mind, a yogin begins developing concentration. This initial practice arouses certain mental factors which counter the hindrances and unify the mind upon its object. The complete suppression of the hindrances marks the achievement of access concentration. The attainment of *jhāna* then lies close at hand. When, through further application, these factors can unify the mind to the degree of immersion in its object, the *jhāna* is actually attained.

The Causal Arising of the Hindrances

The five hindrances, the Buddha teaches, are like all other phenomena causally conditioned, arising and subsiding in correlation with other things which serve as their supports. When these supports are present the hindrances spring up and grow, when the supports are removed they fade away and disappear. Since the hindrances thus depend on other factors for their origination and cessation, the suppression and elimination of the hindrances requires an understanding of these factors, what they are and how to overcome them.

As part of his program for the conquest of the hindrances, the Buddha has taken special care to provide an exact account of their genetic groundwork. This account proceeds at both the general and particular level, laying bare the causes for the hindrances as a group and for each individual member of this group. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha includes the five hindrances in a sequence of conditions nourishing and sustaining ignorance, itself the fundamental root of *saṃsāra*:

> Ignorance, I declare, monks, has its nutriment. It is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment of ignorance? ‘The five hindrances’ should be the reply. I declare, monks, that the five hindrances have their nutriment, are not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment of the five hindrances? ‘The three wrong ways of practice’ should be the reply. They too have their nutriment. What? ‘Nonrestraint of the sense faculties’ should be the reply. They too have their nutriment. What? ‘Lack of mindfulness and self-composure’ should be the reply. That, too, has its nutriment, I declare. What? ‘Lack of thorough work of mind’ [unwise consideration] should be the reply. And what is the nutriment of that? ‘Lack of faith’ should be the reply. What is the nutriment of that? ‘Not listening to true Dhamma’ I declare, monks. That not listening to true Dhamma has its nutriment, is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment of not listening to true Dhamma? ‘Not following after the very man’ should be the reply.[1]

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[1] F. L. Woodward and E. M. Hare, trans. *The Book of the Gradual Sayings* (*Aṅguttara-Nikāya*) *Or More-Numbered Suttas*. [Vol. 1: (Ones, Twos, Threes), translated by F. L. Woodward with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids; vol. 2: (*The Book of the Fours*), translated by F. L. Woodward with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids; vol. 3: (*The Books of the Fives and Sixes*), translated by E. M. Hare with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids; vol. 4: (*The Books of the Sevens*, *Eights and Nines*), translated by E. M. Hare with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids; vol. 5: (*The Book of the Tens and Elevens*), translated by

As this statement points out, the five hindrances while "nourishing" ignorance are nourished in turn by the three wrong ways of practice, non-restraint of the senses, lack of mindfulness and self-composure, unwise consideration, and so on. Through unwise consideration a man fails to control his mind. Lacking mindfulness he allows his senses to roam unchecked in their objective fields, seeking sensual gratification. Obsessed by sense stimuli, he then engages in the three wrong ways of practice – bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct – and these actions reinforce the hindrances, which then maintain the ignorance that holds him in bondage.

The Buddha often calls attention to the crucial role played by "unwise consideration" (*ayoniso manasikāra*) in the arising of unwholesome states. Unwise consideration is "inexpedient reflection, reflection on the wrong track" (*anupāyamanasikāra*). It is reflection which apprehends its object through the four "perversions" (*vipallāsa*), considering the impermanent as permanent, pain as pleasure, non-self as self, and the foul as beautiful.[1] This wrong reflection is particularly instrumental in causing the arising and growth of all the five hindrances:

> In him who practices unmindful observation sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, excitement and flurry [restless and worry], and doubt, if not already arisen, arise, and if already arisen, sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, excitement and flurry [restlessness and worry], and doubt are conducive to increasing, and growth thereof.[2] (Wr. tr.).

But unwise consideration functions not only as a general cause for the hindrances as a group; it is a specific cause for each of the hindrances individually as well. As the general phenomenon of incorrect attention unwise consideration serves as the common ground for all the hindrances. Acts of incorrect attention, however, always take on

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F. L. Woodward with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids. (Pali Text Society Translation Series nos. 22, 24, 25-27]. 5 vols. 1932-36; reprint, London: Luzac & Co., 1936-79), 5:79 (hereafter cited as GS.). "Avijjamp'āhaṃ bhikkave sāhāraṃ vadāmi. No anāhāraṃ. Ko cāhāro avijjā? Pañca nīvaraṇāti'ssa vacanīyaṃ. Pañcap'āhaṃ bhikkhave nīvaraṇe sāhāre vadāmi. No anāhāre. Ko cāhāro pañcannaṃ nīvaraṇānaṃ? Tīṇi duccaritānīti'ssa vacanīyaṃ. Tīṇi p'āhaṃ bhikkhave duccaritāni sāhārāni vadāmi, no anāhārāni. Ko cāhāro tiṇṇaṃ duccaritānaṃ? Indriyasaṃvaroti'ssa vacanīyaṃ. Indriyasaṃvaraṃ p'āhaṃ bhikkhave sāhāraṃ vadāmi no anāhāraṃ. Ko cāhāro indriyasaṃvarassa? Asatāsampajaññanti'ssa vacanīyaṃ… Asatāsampajaññā p'āhaṃ bhikkhave sāhāraṃ vadāmi; no anāhāraṃ… Ko cāhāro asatāsampajaññassa? Ayoniso manasikāroti'ssa vacanīyaṃ. Ayonisomanasikāraṃ p'āhaṃ bhikkhave sāhāraṃ vadāmi; no anāhāraṃ. Ko cāhāro ayonisomanasikārassa? Assaddhiyanti'ssa vacanīyaṃ. Assaddhiyaṃ p'āhaṃ bhikkhave sāhāraṃ vadāmi; no anāhāraṃ. Ko cāhāro assaddhiyassa? Asaddhammasavananti'ssa vacanīyaṃ. Asaddhammasavanaṃ p'āhaṃ bhikkhave sāhāraṃ vadāmi; no anāhāraṃ. Ko cāhāro asaddhamasavanassa? Asappurisa saṃsevoti'ssa vacanīyaṃ." AN. 5:113.

[1] Soma Thera, trans., *The Way of Mindfulness*, *being a translation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya*; *its Commentary*, *the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Vaṇṇanā of the Papañcasūdanī of Buddhaghosa Thera*; *and Excerpts from the Līnatthapakāsanā Ṭīkā*, *Marginal Notes*, *of Dhammapāla Thera on the Commentary*, (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1941-1967), p. 116 (hereafter cited as Soma Thera, *Way of Mindfulness*).

[2] "Ayoniso bhikkhave manasikaroto anuppanno ceva kāmachando uppajjati uppanno ca kāmacchando bhīyyobhāvāya vepullāya saṃvattati. Anuppanno ceva byāpādo uppajjati… Anuppannaṃ ceva thīnamiddhaṃ…, uddhaccakukkuccaṃ…, Ayoniso ca bhikkhave manasikaroto anuppannāceva vicikicchā uppajjati, uppannā ca vicikicchā bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya saṃvattati." SN. 5:93-94.

particular forms which can be correlated with particular hindrances. Differences in the modes in which unwise consideration occurs are determined by the variations in its objects and associated factors. Depending on these variations, unwise consideration becomes a cause for each separate hindrance:

> Just as this body, monks, is sustained by nutriment, stands in dependence on nutriment, and does not stand without nutriment, in the same way the five hindrances are sustained by nutriment, stand in dependence on nutriment, and do not stand without nutriment.
>
> 1. What, monks, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, and for the growth and expansion of sensual desire that has already arisen? There is, monks, the beautiful appearance of things. Habitual unwise consideration of that is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, and for the growth and expansion of sensual desire that has already arisen.
>
> 2. And what, monks, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen ill will, and for the growth and expansion of ill will that has already arisen? There is, monks, the repulsive appearance of things. Habitual unwise consideration of that is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen ill will…
>
> 3. And what, monks, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sloth and torpor…? There is, monks, discontent, drowsiness, langour, surfeit after meals, and sluggishness of mind. Habitual unwise consideration of them is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sloth and torpor…
>
> 4. And what, monks, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen restlessness and worry…? There is, monks, non-tranquility of mind. Habitual unwise consideration of that is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen restlessness and worry.
>
> 5. And what, monks, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen doubt…? There are, monks, matters which are grounds for doubt. Habitual unwise consideration of them is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen doubt…[1] (Wr. tr.).

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[1] “Seyyathāpi bhikkhave ayaṃ kāyo āhāraṭṭhitiko āhāraṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhati anāhāro no tiṭṭhati. Evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave pañca nīvaraṇā āhāraṭṭhitikā āhāraṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhanti, anāhāraṃ no tiṭṭhanti.

> [1] Ko ca bhikkhave āhāro anuppannassa vā kāmacchandassa uppādāya uppannassa vā kāmacchandassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya? Atthi bhikkhave subhanimittaṃ; tattha ayonisomanasikārabahulīkāro ayaṃ āhāro anuppannassa vā kāmacchandassa uppādāya uppannassa vā kāmacchandassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya.
>
> [2] Ko ca bhikkhave āhāro anuppannassa vā byāpādassa uppādāya uppannassa vā byāpādassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya? Atthi bhikkhave paṭighanimittaṃ. Tattha ayonisomanasikārabahulīkāro ayaṃ āhāro anuppannassa vā byāpādassa uppādāya uppannassa vā byāpādassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya.
>
> [3] … thīnamiddhassa… ? Atthi bhikkhave arati tandivijambhitā, bhattasammado, cetaso ca līnattaṃ; tattha…
>
> [4] … uddhaccakukkuccassa…? … cetaso avūpasamo…
>
> [5] … vicikicchāya uppādāya…? Atthi bhikkhave vicikicchāṭṭhāniyā dhammā, tattha ayoniso manasikārabahulīkāro ayaṃ āhāro anuppannāya vā vicikicchāya uppādāya uppannāya vā vicikicchāya bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya.” SN. 5:64-65.

Thus we see that the five hindrances arise and increase, in general, through engagement in the three wrong ways of practice, lack of sense control, lack of mindfulness, and unwise consideration. Specifically, sensual desire arises through unwise consideration of the attractive appearance of things, ill will through unwise consideration of the repulsive features of things, sloth and torpor through unwise consideration of states conducive to lethargy, restlessness and worry through unwise consideration of disturbing states, and doubt through unwise consideration of matters provocative of doubt.

The Elimination of the Hindrances

Once the genetic basis for the rise and growth of the hindrances becomes clear, the way to counteract and eliminate them follows as a matter of course. Since the hindrances occur in dependence on specific causes and conditions, their control and conquest requires simply that their generative causes be removed. Though the actual achievement of such a stoppage may be difficult and require diligent effort, it is the fundamental optimism of Buddhism that the qualities needed to overcome the hindrances are not beyond man's capacity for development, provided only that he is given the proper methodology. It is the purpose of the Buddha's discipline to provide precisely that methodology which leads to the conquest of the hindrances and thereby of ignorance itself.

The final conquest of the hindrances is effected exclusively by the four supramundane paths. To reach the path the development of insight (*vipassanā*) is indispensable, since insight into the true characteristics of phenomena issues in the supramundane wisdom of the path. But in order for insight to arise, the hindrances have to be attenuated to a degree where they no longer disrupt the process of contemplation.

The canonical texts offer two basic approaches to the preliminary overcoming of the hindrances. One is the suppression of the hindrances by the development of serenity (*samatha*), either access concentration or *jhāna*; the other is their elimination in the course of developing insight. The former is described in the discourses of the Buddha expounding the stages of the "gradual training," the latter in the discourses on the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, "the foundations of mindfulness".[1]

Two different approaches are offered because of the differing mental dispositions of disciples. Disciples of a contemplative bent generally incline to first attain concentration by suppressing the hindrances through *jhāna* and then move on to the development of insight. These are called practitioners of the vehicle of serenity (*samathayānika*) who develop "insight preceded by serenity." Other disciples, of an intellectual bent, are generally disposed to strive immediately for insight, leaving until later the task of deepening concentration. These are called practitioners of the vehicle of insight

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[1] For the gradual training, see DN. 1:47-86. MN. 1:175-84; 271-80. For *satipaṭṭhāna*, see DN. 2:290-315 and MN. 1:55-63.

(*vipassanāyānika*) who develop "serenity preceded by insight." Both types must eventually cultivate insight by practising the foundations of mindfulness, since insight-wisdom is needed to reach the supramundane path. They differ, not with respect to the inclusion of insight, but in the sequence they follow to develop insight. The practitioner of serenity attains *jhāna* then cultivates insight, and finally reaches the path. The practitioner of insight reaches the path directly by cultivating insight, without relying on a foundation of *jhāna*.

We will now consider in turn each of the two approaches to the overcoming of the hindrances, taking first the approach of the gradual training, in which the attainment of serenity is emphasized, and then the approach of the foundations of mindfulness, which emphasizes the direct development of insight. Finally we will briefly note the way the hindrances are eradicated by the four supramundane paths.

The Way of the Gradual Training

We saw above that the hindrances are maintained by a series of conditions beginning with failure to follow after superior men and continuing on through not listening to the true Dhamma, lack of faith, unwise consideration, absence of mindfulness and self-possession, non-restraint of the senses, and engagement in the three wrong ways of practice. The standard canonical presentation of the gradual training, as found for example in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta, shows the way this originative pattern is reversed.[1] The presentation begins with the appearance in the world of the Buddha and his teaching of the doctrine, which make available the opportunity to follow after superior men and to hear the true Dhamma. The gain of faith in the teaching leads to commitment to the training, which proceeds according to a graded step-by-step structure designed to lead the practitioner gradually to the goal of liberation.

The most elementary step along the path is the observance of moral discipline. The moral precepts, varying in range from the five precepts for the laity to the full code of Vinaya rules for monks, have the purpose of inculcating restraint of body and speech. Since the unwholesome mental states motivating bodily and verbal misconduct grow stronger when such actions are indulged in, to overcome the defilements it is necessary to begin by controlling their coarser expressions by way of physical and verbal activity. This control is exercised by acting in conformity with the rules of conduct. By careful observance of the moral code, the disciple can eliminate the bodily and verbal modes of misconduct which nourish the five hindrances, thereby weakening their outer impulsive force.

The mere observance of moral rules, however, is not sufficient to combat the hold of the defilements upon the interior processes of the mind. The defilements must be dealt with at their own level by being subjected to a thoroughgoing mental discipline. This training begins with the restraint of the senses (*indriya saṃvara*). Seeing a visible form with the eye, or cognizing any object with any sense faculty, the disciple does not seize upon its general appearance or details, but controls, guards, and masters his sense faculties.[1] Since apprehension of the general appearance and details of sensually attractive and repulsive objects can become a ground for attachment and aversion, the meditator has to avoid this entrancement with sense objects, confining his attention to the bare data without elaborating upon them through subjective commentary. Then, endowed with this self-restraint, the disciple develops mindfulness and discernment (*satisampajañña*) in all his activities, movements, and modes of deportment.[2] By examining everything he does with full awareness and clear comprehension, he can prevent these activities from becoming bases for the arising of the hindrances. To avoid attachment and aversion with respect to the physical supports of life, he is further enjoined to cultivate contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) with a bare minimum of robes, food, medicine, and shelter.[3]

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[1] *Dial.*, 1:3-26; DN. 1:64-69.

These preliminary trainings in morality, restraint of the senses, mindfulness and discernment, and contentment provide the necessary preparation for the cultivation of the higher consciousness through the practice of meditation. Once he has fulfilled these preliminaries the disciple is prepared to go into solitude to develop the *jhānas*, and it is here that he meets the hindrances in direct confrontation.

> He, returning from alms-gathering after his meal, sits down cross-legged holding the back erect, having made mindfulness rise up in front of him. He, having got rid of covetousness for the world, lives with a mind devoid of coveting, he purifies the mind of coveting. By getting rid of the taint of ill will, he lives benevolent in mind; and compassionate for the welfare of all creatures and beings, he purifies the mind of the taint of ill will. By getting rid of sloth and torpor, he lives devoid of sloth and torpor; perceiving the light, mindful and clearly conscious, he purifies the mind of sloth and torpor. By getting rid of restlessness and worry, he lives calmly, the mind subjectively tranquillised, he purifies the mind of restlessness and worry. By getting rid of doubt, he lives doubt-crossed; unperplexed as to the states that are skilled, he purifies his mind of doubt.[4]

The elimination of the hindrances requires, first of all, that the meditator honestly appraises his inner condition by way of introspective self-scrutiny: “If a monk while considering knows thus: ‘the five hindrances have not been got rid of by me,’ he should make an effort to get rid of them."[1] When sensuality, ill will, and the other hindrances are present, "he knows with understanding that they are present."[2] Then, when their presence has been detected, what is required is knowledge of their appropriate antidotes. Since all the hindrances arise, as we saw, through unwise consideration, it follows that the most efficient general way to overcome them is to alter the manner in which things are attended to. This means, in effect, to replace unwise consideration with wise consideration (*yonisomanasikāra*). Wise consideration is consideration which accords with the true nature of things; it is "expedient reflection, reflection going on the right track,… reflection that considers the facts of impermanence, suffering, soullessness, and impurity according to reality."[3] By correcting the subtle perceptual and cognitive distortions which supply the hindrances with food for growth, the constant cultivation of wise consideration removes the hindrances and holds them at bay: "But, monks, in him who gives systematic attention, sensual desire (… doubt) which has not arisen does not arise, and if it has arisen it is abandoned."[4]

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[1] DN. 1:70. MN. 1:180-81.

[2] DN. 1:70. MN. 1:181.

[3] DN. l:71. MN. 1:180.

[4] MLS. 1:227. “So pacchābhattaṃ piṇḍapāta-paṭikkanto nisīdati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujuṃ kāyaṃ paṇidhāya parimukhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā. So abhijjhaṃ loke pahāya vigatābhijjhena cetasā viharati, abhijjhāya cittaṃ parīsodheti. Vyāpāda-padosaṃ pahāya avyāpanna-citto viharati, sabba-pāṇa-bhūtahitānukampī vyāpāda-padosā cittaṃ parisodheti. Thīnamiddhaṃ pahāya vigata-thīnamiddho viharati, ālokasaññī sato sampajāno thīna-middhā cittaṃ parisodheti. Uddhacca-kukkuccaṃ pahāya anuddhato viharati, ajjhattaṃ vūpasanta citto uddhacca-kukkuccā cittaṃ parisodheti. Vicikicchaṃ pahāya tiṇṇa vicikiccho viharati, akathaṃkathī kusalesu dhammesu vicikicchāya cittaṃ parisodheti.” MN. 1:181. DN. 1:71.

Just as each hindrance has its individual nutriment in the particular kind of unwise consideration corresponding to its own unique operative mode, so each hindrance has its "non-nutriment" (*anāhāra*), the cause for its elimination, in the appropriate kind of wise consideration.

> And what, monks, is no food for the arising of sensual lust not yet arisen, or for the more-becoming and growth thereof, if already arisen? There is, monks, the repulsive feature of things. Systematic attention thereto, if made much of, is no food for the arising of sensual lust, if not yet arisen, or for its more-becoming and growth if already arisen.[5]

Similarly, wise consideration of the mental liberation of loving kindness (*mettā-cetovimutti*) counteracts ill will; wise consideration of the elements of effort (*ārambhadhātu*), exertion (*nikkamadhātu*), and striving (*parakkamadhātu*) counteracts sloth and torpor; wise consideration of tranquility (*cetaso vūpasama*) counteracts restlessness and worry; and wise consideration of wholesome and unwholesome states (*kusalākusaladhammā*) counteracts doubt.[6]

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[1] MLS. 3:344. "Sace, bhikkhu paccavekkhamāno evaṃ jānāti: 'Appahīnā kho me pañca nīvaraṇā'ti, tena, … bhikkhunā pañcannaṃ nīvaraṇānaṃ pahānāya vāyamitabbaṃ." MN. 3:295.

[2] DN. 2:300-301.

[3] Soma Thera, *Way of Mindfulness*, p. 117. "Yoniso manasikāro nāma upāyamanasikāro patha manasikāro anicce aniccanti vā dukkhe dukkhanti vā anattani anattāti vā asubhe asubhanti vā manasikāro." MN.A. 1:286.

[4] KS. 5:71. "Yoniso ca kho bhikkhave manasikaroto anuppanno ceva kāmacchando (… vicikicchā) nūppajjati. Uppanno ca kāmacchando (… vicikicchā) pahīyati." SN. 5:85.

[5] KS. 5:88. "Ko ca bhikkhave anāhāro anuppannassa vā kāmacchandassa uppādāya uppannassa vā kāmacchandassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya? Atthi bhikkhave asubbanimittaṃ. Tattha yonisomanasikāra-bahulīkāro ayaṃ anāhāro anuppannassa vā kāmacchandassa uppādāya uppannassa vā kāmacchandassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya." SN. 5:105.

[6] *Ibid*., pp. 105-106.

In the commentaries the Buddha’s miscellaneous suggestions on the elimination of the hindrances are organized into a systematic exposition of six measures conducive to the vanquishing of each hindrance. Sensual desire is to be abandoned by:

> Taking up the sensuously inauspicious subject of meditation; application for the development of the jhāna on the sensuously inauspicious subject of meditation; the guarded state of the controlling faculties of sense; moderation in food; the sympathy and support of good men in the endeavour; stimulating talk that helps the accomplishment of the object in view.[1]

Ill will or anger is overcome by the following six measures:

> Taking up the practice of the love subject of meditation; applying oneself to the development of jhāna on the thought of love; reflection on one’s action as one’s own property; abundance of wise consideration; sympathetic and helpful companionship of the good; and stimulating talk that assists the development of the thought of love and the overthrow of anger.[2]

The six things leading to the conquest of sloth and torpor are:

> The seeing of the reason of sloth and torpor in the fact of eating too much, or gluttony; the changing of the postures completely; reflection on the perception of light; staying in the open; sympathetic and helpful companionship of the good; and stimulating talk that assists in dispelling sloth and torpor.[3]

The six things conducive to eliminating restlessness and worry are:

> Knowledge; questioning; understanding of disciplinary rules; association with those more experienced and older than oneself in the practice of things like virtue; sympathetic and helpful companionship; and stimulating talk that helps the rejection of mental agitation and worry.[4]

And the following six measures lead to the transcendence of doubt:

> The state of being learned in the Buddha’s teaching; of inquiring about the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Order of Real Saints; of understanding thoroughly the nature of the Discipline; of being decided about the truth of the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Order of the Real Saints; sympathetic and helpful companionship; and stimulating talk that helps to dispel doubt.[5]

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[1] Soma Thera, *Way of Mindfulness*, p. 117. “Asubhanimittassa uggaho asubhabhāvanānuyogo indriyesu guttadvāratā bhojane mattaññutā kalyāṇamittatā sappāyakathā’ti.” MN.A. 1:286.

[2] Soma Thera, *Way of Mindfulness*, p. 120. “Mettānimittassa uggaho mettābhāvanānuyogo kamassakatāpaccavekkhanā paṭisankhanābahulatā kalyāṇamittatā sappāyakathā’ti” MN.A. 1:287.

[3] Soma Thera, *Way of Mindfulness*, p. 123. “Atibhojane nimittaggāho iriyāpathasamparivattanatā āloka-saññāmanasikāro abbhokāsavāso kalyāṇamittatā sappāyakathā’ti.” MN. A. 1:288.

[4] Soma Thera, *Way of Mindfulness*, p. 124. “Bahussutatā paripucchakatā vinaye pakataññutā vuddhasevitā kalyāṇamittatā sappāyakathā’ti.” MN.A. 1:289.

[5] Soma Thera, *Way of Mindfulness*, p. 126. “Bahussutatā paripucchakatā vinaye pakataññutā adhimokkha-bahulatā kalyāṇamittatā sappāyakathā’ti.” MN.A. 1:290.

The suppression of hindrances effected by these techniques is necessary not only as a preliminary for entering upon *jhāna*, but also to ensure the ability to extend the attainment and make it last long. Even if a meditator can overcome the hindrances by force of sheer concentration, if he has not weakened their grip on the subliminal layers of the mind by right reflection and mental application, they will tend to break through the absorption and dispel his concentration. Therefore his enjoyment of *jhāna* will be short and superficial.

> When a bhikkhu enters upon a *jhāna* without (first) completely suppressing lust by reviewing the dangers in sense desires, etc., and without (first) completely tranquillising bodily irritability by tranquillising the body, and without (first) completely removing stiffness and torpor by bringing to mind the elements of initiative, etc., and without (first) completely abolishing agitation and worry by bringing to mind the sign of serenity, etc., and without (first) completely purifying his mind of other states that obstruct concentration, then that bhikkhu soon comes out of that *jhāna* again, like a bee that has gone into an unpurified hive, like a king who has gone into an unclean park.[1]

The Way of Mindfulness

In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the "Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness,"[2] the Buddha proposes a different technique for overcoming the hindrances, one which utilizes direct, mindful observation of the hindrances themselves as a method for loosening their hold upon the mind. This approach presupposes the same basic set of preliminaries observed in following the gradual training: moral discipline, restraint of the senses, mindfulness and discernment, and contentment. However, instead of employing a variety of techniques to counteract the hindrances with the aim of reaching *jhāna*, the method of mindfulness proceeds directly to the contemplation of mental and bodily phenomena with the aim of arousing insight. The diverse phenomena of body and mind are classified into four "foundations of mindfulness": the body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), states of mind (*citta*), and mental objects (*dhamma*). The confrontation with the hindrances enters into the last set, the contemplation of mental objects (*dhammānupassanā*), where it comes as the first exercise in this group:

> Here, O bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating the mental objects in the mental objects of the five hindrances.
>
> How, O bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five hindrances?

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[1] PP., p. 157. "Yo hi bhikkhu kāmādīnavapaccavekkhanādīhi kāmacchandaṃ na suṭṭhu vikkhambhetvā, kāyapassaddhivasena kāyaduṭṭhullaṃ na suṭṭhu paṭipassaddhaṃ katvā, ārambhadhātumanasikārādivasena thīnamiddhaṃ na suṭṭhu paṭivinodetvā, samathanimittamanasikārādivasena uddhaccakukkuccaṃ na suṭṭhu samūhataṃ katvā, aññe pi samādhiparipanthe dhamme na suṭṭhu visodhetvā jhānaṃ samāpajjati, so avisodhitaṃ āsayaṃ paviṭṭhabhamaro viya, avisuddhaṃ uyyānaṃ paviṭṭharājā viya ca, khippaṃ-eva nikkhamati." Vism., p. 122.

[2] DN. 2:290-315. MN. 1:55-63.

> Here, O bhikkhus, when sensuality is present, a bhikkhu with understanding knows: ‘I have sensuality,’ or when sensuality is not present he with understanding knows: ‘I have no sensuality’. He understands how the arising of the non-arisen sensuality comes to be; he understands how the abandoning of the arisen sensuality comes to be; and he understands how the non-arising in the future of the abandoned sensuality comes to be… anger is present… sloth and torpor are present… agitation and worry are present… When doubt is present, he with understanding knows: ‘I have doubt’. He understands how the arising of non-arisen doubt comes to be; he understands how the abandoning of the arisen doubt comes to be; and he understands how the non-arising in the future of the abandoned doubt comes to be.[1]

Since it is impossible for a meditator to completely avoid situations tending to provoke the hindrances into activity, he requires a technique which enables him to deal with them effectively at the causal level – to prevent them from arising if possible, or to eliminate them swiftly and surely if they should arise. Mindful observation provides him with just such a technique. Through bare attention to the hindrances, he is able to gain clear comprehension of their individual nature and to discern their causes and conditions. Contemplation of the hindrances is a means both to calm and insight. By directly facing each hindrance that presents itself, the meditator is able to divest it of the destructive power it can freely exercise when it escapes undetected. Repeated introspective self-examination, performed with complete sincerity, gives him the self-knowledge required to transform and purify the direction of his mental life. In this way mindfulness of the hindrances becomes a means to the development of concentrated calm.

The same contemplation, when directed towards the hindrances as bare instances of phenomena exhibiting the universal features of phenomena, becomes a means for gaining insight (*vipassanā*). By observing the rise and fall of the mental processes associated with the hindrances, the meditator gains insight into the fact of impermanence (*anicca*). By attending to their restless nature and disturbing effects, he sees the truth of suffering (*dukkha*). And by viewing the hindrances as mere impersonal events, devoid of any substance or ego-oriented reference point, he comes to an appreciation of the truth of selflessness (*anattā*). If these insights are pursued and developed to the deeper levels they imply, they could even issue in the attainment of the supramundane path. In this way the method of mindfulness is able to transform even obstacles to meditation into integral parts of the meditative process.

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[1] *Dial.*, 2:334-35. “Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu santaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ kāmacchandaṃ ‘atthi me ajjhattaṃ kāmacchando’ti’ pajānāti, asantaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ kāmacchandaṃ ’n’atthi me ajjhattaṃ kāmacchando’ti pajānāti. Yathā ca anuppannassa kāmacchandassa uppādo hoti taṃ ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppannassa kāmacchandassa pahānaṃ hoti taṃ ca pajānāti, yathā ca pahinassa kāmacchandassa āyatiṃ anuppādo hoti taṃ ca pajānāti… ajjhattaṃ vyāpādaṃ… thīnamiddhaṃ… uddhaccakukkuccaṃ… vicikicchaṃ ’atthi me ajjhattaṃ vicikicchā’ti pajānāti, asantaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ vicikicchaṃ ’n’atthi me ajjhattaṃ vicikiccha’ti pajānāti. Yathā ca anuppannāya vicikicchāya uppado hoti taṃ ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppanāya vicikicchāya pahānaṃ hoti taṃ ca pajānāti, yathā ca pahīnāya vicikicchāya āyatiṃ anuppādo hoti taṃ ca pajānāti.” DN. 2:300-301.

In the practice of insight meditation no deliberate effort is made to develop concentration. Since the practitioner does not confine his attention to a single object, the arising of concentration at the access or absorption level is impossible. Insight meditation involves the contemplation of the constantly changing flow of phenomena. its object is shifting from moment to moment, as one phenomenon passes away to be replaced by the next. Thus the stability of a single focal point essential to attaining *jhāna* is absent.

Nevertheless, the practice of insight does produce a spontaneous kind of concentration existing concurrently with itself. This kind of mental unification, called "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*) comes into being through the fixity with which the mind attends to the changing phenomena. As the mind examines undistractedly the phenomenal process, the successive moments of contemplation acquire a concentrative power equal to the task of suppressing the hindrances. Though it does not possess the force needed to attain *jhāna*, this momentary concentration arisen through insight-practice is sufficiently strong to prevent the hindrances from disturbing contemplation and to allow the wisdom of insight to arise. Thus even without developing *jhāna* the practitioner of bare insight can build up concentration moment by moment, giving him enough mental unification to serve as a basis for insight and attainment of the path.

In sum, the practitioner of serenity first suppresses the hindrances by access concentration or *jhāna*, then begins to develop insight. The practitioner of bare insight begins by contemplating the four foundations of mindfulness. He incidentally develops momentary concentration which eliminates the hindrances, then he arouses insight.

The Eradication of the Hindrances

In the *jhāna* the hindrances are abandoned only by way of suppression. Though inactive, they still remain as dormancies in the mental continuum, capable of cropping up again if sufficiently stimulated. The actual eradication of the hindrances requires the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which abandons the hindrances by cutting them off at the root. This abandonment by cutting off (*samucchedappahāna*) is accomplished with respect to different hindrances by different paths in the four stages of supramundane development. According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the first path, the path of stream-entry (*sotāpattimagga*), cuts off the hindrance of doubt. The second, the path of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi magga*), weakens all the hindrances but cuts off none. The third, the path of the non-returner (*anāgāmi magga*), cuts off the hindrances of sensual desire, ill will, and worry. And the fourth, the path of arahatship (*arahatta magga*), cuts off the remainder – sloth and torpor and restlessness.[1] Thus it is only the arahat who has completely overcome all the hindrances. In the arahat, the Buddha explains, "these five hindrances are abandoned, cut down at the root, made like a palmtree stump, made something that has ceased to be, so as not to grow again in future time."[2]

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[1] PP., p. 802. Vism., p. 589.

[2] "Tesaṃ pañca nīvaraṇā pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvatthukatā anabhāvakatā āyatiṃ anuppādadhammā." SN. 5:327.

The Benefits of Abandoning the Hindrances

From the perspective of Pāli Buddhism, the reduction and elimination of the five hindrances is essential not only to the attainment of *jhāna*, but to all aspects of man's moral and spiritual development. The hindrances represent an entire spectrum of defiled mental states. Their presence implies the presence as well of the unwholesome roots, the floods, bonds, cankers, clinging, ties and fetters.[1] They are like a debt, a disease, imprisonment, slavery, and a desert road.[2] When they overpower the mind a man can perceive neither his own good, the good of others, or the good of both.[3] Under their influence he will do what he should not do and neglect what he ought to do.[4] They corrupt the mind and weaken wisdom.[5] They cause spiritual blindness and ignorance, destroy wisdom, lead to vexation, and distract from *nibbāna*.[6] Just as gold impaired by five impurities – iron, copper, tin, lead, and silver – is not pliant and wieldy, lacks radiance, is brittle, and cannot be wrought well, so the mind, corrupted by the five hindrances, "is not pliant and wieldy, lacks radiant lucidity and firmness and cannot concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints."[7] Therefore the Buddha can say of them: "Rightly speaking a person, bhikkhus, would call the five hindrances 'a heap of demerits', for indeed one entire mass of demerit are the five hindrances."[8]

The abandonment of the hindrances marks the beginning of freedom: "But when these five hindrances have been put away within him, he looks upon himself as freed from debt, rid of diseases, out of jail, a free man, and secure."[9] With the hindrances abandoned, there is no limit to the possibilities for spiritual growth. Just as gold free from the five impurities will be pliant and supple, radiant and firm, and can be wrought well, so, the Buddha says:

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[1] PP., p. 147. Vism., p. 87.

[2] *Dial*., 1:84. DN. 1:73.

[3] KS. 5:103. "Atthatthaṃ pi… paratthaṃ pi… ubhayatthaṃ pi tasmiṃ samaye yathābhūtaṃ na jānāti na passati." SN. 5:121-22.

[4] AN. 2:67

[5] KS. 5:79. "Cetaso upakkilesā paññāya dubbalikaraṇā." SN. 5:94.

[6] KS. 5:81. "Nīvaraṇā andhakaraṇā acakkhukaraṇā aññāṇakaraṇā paññānirodhikā vighātapakkhiyā anibbānisaṃvattanikā." SN. 5:97.

[7] Nyānaponika Thera, trans. and ed., *The Five Mental Hindrances And Their Conquest*, *Selected Texts from the Pali Canon and the Commentaries*. (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1961), p. 2 (hereafter cited as Nyānaponika, *Five Mental Hindrances*). "Evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave pañcime cittassa upakkilesā, yehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ cittaṃ na ceva mudu hoti, na ca kamaniyaṃ na ca pabhassaraṃ pabhaṅgu ca na ca sammāsamādhiyati āsavānaṃ khayayā." AN. 3:16.

[8] KS. 5:124. "Akusalarāsi ti bhikkhave vadamāno pañcanīvaraṇe sammāvadamāno vadeyya. Kevalo hāyaṃ bhikkhave akusalarāsi yadidaṃ pañcanīvaraṇā." SN. 5:145.

[9] *Dial*. 1:84. "Seyyathā pi mahārāja ānanyaṃ yathā ārogyaṃ yathā bandhanā mokkhaṃ yathā bhujissaṃ yathā khemantabhūmiṃ, evaṃ eva kho mahārāja bhikkhu ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassati." DN. 1:73.

> If the mind is freed of these five impurities, it will be pliant and supple, will have radiant lucidity and firmness, and will concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints. To whatever state realizable by the higher mental faculties one may direct the mind, one will, in each case, acquire the capacity of realization, if the (other) conditions are fulfilled.[1]

The abandonment of the five hindrances is the precondition, not only for the attainment of *jhāna*, but for all other higher achievements. It is by the abandoning of the hindrances that the four *Brahmavihāras*[2] become possible, as the meditator must purge his mind of the hindrances prior to suffusing the world with the sublime emotions of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.[3] Before teaching a receptive disciple the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha always made sure that his mind was "ready, malleable, devoid of the hindrances"[4] (*vinīvaraṇacitta*) in order to ensure his ability to grasp this profound doctrine, inaccessible to a defiled mind. Freedom from the hindrances is thus a requisite for the arising of the "eye of Dhamma," the direct insight into the truth which leads to the first level of liberation, the stage of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). Those who have entered the stream and are training to attain "supreme security from bondage" dwell having abandoned the five hindrances.[5] It is when his mind has become "composed, quite purified, quite clarified, without blemish, without defilement, grown soft and workable, fixed, immovable,"[6] that the disciple can direct it to attain the triple knowledge (*tevijjā*) – the recollection of former lives, the knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings, and the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers.[7] All who reach liberation first abandon the hindrances:

> All those who are emancipated from the world, who were emancipated or will be emancipated, are emancipated by abandoning the five hindrances which are corruptions of the mind and weakening of wisdom, establishing their minds

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[1] Nyānaponika, *Five Mental Hindrances*, pp. 2-3. "Yato ca kho bhikkhave cittaṃ imehi pañcahi upakkilesehi vimuttaṃ hoti, taṃ hoti cittaṃ mudu ca kammaniyaṃ ca pabhassaraṃ ca na ca pabhaṅgu sammā samādhiyati āsavānaṃ khayāya. Yassa yassa ca abhiññāsacchikaraṇīyassa dhammassa cittaṃ abhinnāmeti abhiññāsacchikiriyāya tatra tatra'eva sakkhibhabbataṃ pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane." AN. 3:17-17.

[2] To speak of the *Brahmavihāras* as an alternative to the attainment of *jhāna* is perhaps misleading. The emotional states comprised by the *Brahmavihāras* are meditation subjects used to achieve serenity, and the full development of the *Brahmavihāras* issues in the *jhānas*.

[3] DN. 3:49-50.

[4] DN. 1:110. MN. 1:380.

[5] KS. 5:29. "Ye te āvuso Mahānāma bhikkhū sekhā appattamānasā anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ patthayamānā viharanti, te pañca nīvaraṇe pahāya viharanti." SN. 5:327.

[6] MLS. 1:228-29. "So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgane vigatūpakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite ānejjappatte," MN. 1:182.

[7] "Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇāya… sattānaṃ cutūpapātañāṇāya… āsavānaṃ khayañāṇāya cittaṃ abhininnāmeti." MN. 1:183.

> well in the four foundations of mindfulness; and developing correctly the seven factors of enlightenment.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Even the perfectly enlightened Buddhas of the past, present, and future awaken to supreme, perfect enlightenment by having first abandoned the five hindrances.[2] Thus the Buddha can prescribe his teaching for the destruction of these impediments: “It is for the full comprehension, entire understanding, destruction, elimination of these five hindrances that the Noble Eightfold Path should be cultivated.[3]

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[1] “Ye kho keci lokamhā niyyiṃsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā, sabbe te pañca nīvaraṇe pahāya cetaso upakkilese paññāya dubbalīkaraṇe catusu satipaṭṭhānesu supatiṭṭhitacittā sattabojjhaṅge yathābhūtaṃ bhāvetvā evaṃ ete lokamhā niyyiṃsu vā niyyanti vā niyyissanti vā.” AN. 5:195.

[2] *Dial.* 2:89. DN. 2:83.

[3] KS. 5:49-50. “Imesaṃ kho bhikkhave pañcannaṃ nīvaraṇānaṃ abhiññāya pariññāya parikkhayāya pahānāya ayaṃ ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo bhāvetabbo’ti.” SN. 5:60.

Chapter Four

THE FIRST JHĀNA AND ITS FACTORS

The attainment of *jhāna*, as we said at the outset of the last chapter, can be understood from two points of view: one is the elimination of the states obstructive to its attainment, the factors to be abandoned (*pahānaṅgāni*); the other the acquisition of the states constituting its attainment, the factors of possession (*samannāgataṅgāni*) or *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅgāni*). In the case of the first *jhāna* the factors to be abandoned are the five hindrances. As the meditator strives with diligence to develop concentration he eventually succeeds in suppressing the hindrances, entering the threshold stage of access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*) where the *jhāna* factors are contained in fledgling form. Then, with continued exertions, the *jhāna* factors ripen to the point where they can thrust the mind into the first *jhāna*, the initial stage of absorption (*appaṇāsamādhi*).

The *jhāna* factors are the five mental states: applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness of mind (*cittass'-ekaggatā*). Four of these are mentioned in the formula for the *jhāna*; the fifth, one-pointedness, is added elsewhere.[1] Having led the mind to the *jhāna*, these five phenomena remain in the *jhāna* as its constituting factors. They do not enter the first *jhāna* as mere extrinsic adjuncts, but as defining properties, giving it a distinct shape and character. Thence to understand the first *jhāna* it is necessary to approach it via a study of its factors.

In the present chapter we will examine in detail each of the five factors belonging to the first *jhāna*. We will give special attention to the specific qualities and functions these phenomena possess in the structure of the *jhāna*, as opposed to their occurrence elsewhere. Then we will take a general overview of the *jhāna* itself in order to make it clear that the first *jhāna* is not just a chance combination of unconnected factors but an organic unity of many coordinate states. This will be followed by a look at the place of the *jhāna* in the process of consciousness, the cognitive series used to show the dynamic nature of experience. We will conclude the chapter with some remarks on the ways of perfecting the first *jhāna*, a necessary prelude to the higher development of concentration.

Vitakka: A. General

The word *vitakka*, derived from the Pāli root *tak* (Skt. *tark*) meaning "to think," frequently appears in the texts in conjunction with the other word *vicāra*, which derives from the root *car* (P. & Skt.) meaning "to move." The two together signify two interconnected but distinct aspects of the thought process. The primary word *takka* means literally "thinking"; the prefix *vi* gives it a strengthened sense, so that *vitakka* means pronounced or decisive thinking.[1]

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[1] For the formula, see Chapter III, p. 52.

The word *vitakka* is often found in the suttas in various contexts all suggestive of this meaning of thought. It appears in several places as the final term in a sequence preceded by feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*). Thus referring to himself, the Buddha states that he is aware in every case of the arising, persistence, and passing away of feelings, perceptions, and *vitakkas*:

> Here, Ananda, in the Tathāgata feelings are understood as they arise, as they remain present, as they pass away; perceptions are understood as they arise, as they remain present, as they pass away; applied thoughts (*vitakkā*) are understood as they arise, as they remain present, as they pass away.[2] (Wr. tr.).

Vitakka takes the same objects as perception. It is divided into six classes by way of its objects; thus there are thoughts about forms, thoughts about sounds, thoughts about smells, thoughts about tastes, thoughts about tangibles, and thoughts about ideas. Because *vitakka* has the same objects as perception, but follows the latter in the account of the cognitive process, it is clearly a development and advance beyond the perceptual function. This is borne out by the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta where *vitakka* is shown following perception in the process by which mental impediments (*papañca*) come to obsess the mind. The great disciple Mahākaccāyana explains that in dependence on the sense faculties and their objects consciousness arises. The meeting of the faculty, object, and consciousness is contact (*phassa*). In dependence on contact feeling arises. Then: "What one feels one perceives; what one perceives one thinks about; what one thinks about becomes an impediment."[3] (Wr. tr.).

The understanding of *vitakka* as thought is further supported by an important passage from the Culavedalla Sutta. Here the wise bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā describes *vitakka* and *vicāra* as "activity of speech" (*vacisaṃkhāra*), giving as the reason: "Having first had applied thought and sustained thought, one subsequently breaks out into speech, therefore applied thought and sustained thought is activity of speech."[4] (Wr. tr.). The commentary defines "activity of speech" as that which "causes, creates, or activates speech,"[5] (Wr. tr.), and classifies as activities causing speech *vitakka*, *vicāra*, and the wholesome and unwholesome volitions motivating verbal expression. The sub-commentary to the sutta explains that *vitakka* and *vicāra* are said to activate speech because "the mind without *vitakka* and *vicāra* is unable to make a verbal sound."[1]

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[1] "Balavatara takkassa etaṃ nāmaṃ." Dhs.A., p. 187.

[2] "Idha Ānanda Tathāgatassa viditā vedanā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbhattaṃ gacchanti; viditā saññā, viditā vitakkā uppajjanti. viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbhattaṃ gacchanti." MN. 3:124.

[3] "Yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti." MN. 1:111-12.

[4] Pubbe kho āvuso vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācaṃ bhindati. Tasmā vitakka vicārā vacīsaṅkhāro." MN. 1:301.

[5] "Vācaṃ saṅkharoti karoti nibbatteti ti vacisaṅkhāro." MN.A. 2:263.

(Wr. tr.). Since the inner verbal formulation of ideas precedes and governs their articulation through the apparatus of verbal expression, the key factors in the thinking process are also the mainsprings of intelligible speech.

The thought element in *vitakka* again comes to light in the use of the doubly augmented word *parivitakka* to mean "reflection" or "ratiocination." We frequently see in the texts an individual sitting in solitude give rise to a chain of *parivitakkas*, reflections or reasonings in his mind, which he then expresses outwardly at a later time. Thus, for example, when the Buddha was considering the difficulties the average person would meet in understanding the Dhamma, it is said: "Then as the Lord was meditating in seclusion a reasoning arose in his mind thus..."[2] "Reflections on reasons" (*akaraparivitakka*) is further mentioned as one of the inadequate grounds for adopting a belief rejected in the famous passage of the Kālāma Sutta.[3]

Elsewhere the Buddha speaks of eight thoughts of a great man (*mahāpurisā vitakkā*), which he recommends to his disciples. These are the thoughts that the Dhamma is

1. for one who wants little.
2. for one who is contented.
3. for the secluded,
4. for the energetic,
5. for one who is mindful,
6. for the composed,
7. for the wise, and
8. for one who delights in freedom from impediments.[4]

Here the identification of *vitakka* with thought appears quite explicit.

Nevertheless, although *vitakka* does function as an essential ingredient in discursive thinking, it would be premature to equate it flatly with verbally formulated thought. The reason for this qualification is that *vitakka* also occurs in states of consciousness where thought formulation is not in evidence, as for example in the consciousness of the first *jhāna*, in the supramundane consciousness of the noble path, as well as in more primitive types of bare sense cognition. Thence the question arises as to whether *vitakka* has a more elemental meaning than verbalized thinking, and if so, what that meaning is.

The answers to these questions are provided by the Abhidhamma, building upon a suggested solution already found in the suttas. The suttas use the word *saṃkappa* –

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[1] "Na hi taṃ vitakka vicārarahitacittaṃ vacighosaṃ nibbattetuṃ sakkoti." Dhammapāla, [*Majjhima Nikāya Ṭīka*] [vols. 1-2] *Mulapaṇṇāsa ṭīkā*; [vol. 3:] *Majjimapaṇṇāsa ṭīkā… Uparipaṇṇāsa ṭīkā*. [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 3 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1960-61], 2:383 (hereafter cited as MN.T.).

[2] I. B. Horner, trans. *The Book of the Discipline* (*Vinaya-Piṭaka*), Vols. 1-3: (*Suttavibhanga*), vol. 4: (*Mahāvagga*), vol. 5: (*Cullavagga*), vol. 6: (*Parivāra*), [Sacred Books of the Buddhists Series, vols. 10-11, 13-14, 20, 25], 6 vols. (London: Luzac & Co., 1951-72), 4:6 (hereafter cited as BD.). "Atha kho bhagavato rahogatassa patisallīnassa evaṃ cetaso parivitakko udapādi." Vinp. 1:4.

[3] AN. 1:189.

[4] AN. 5:385.

usually translated "thought," "intention," or "aim" – as an interchangeable equivalent of *vitakka*. In one passage of the Mahācattarīsaka Sutta the Buddha defines *sammā-saṃkappa*, the "right intention" occurring in the supramundane path, by a chain of synonyms inclusive of *vitakka*.[1] The Dhammasaṅgaṇi, in its analysis of the states, picks up these synonyms and gives a definition of wholesome *vitakka* identical in all respects with the sutta definition except that it omits the phrases limited to the supramundane path.

> The ratiocination, the conception (*vitakka*), which on that occasion is the disposition [intention], the fixation, the focussing, the application of the mind, right intention – this is the "conception" (*vitakka*) that there then is.[2]

The Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā elaborates upon these terms as follows:

> "Intention" (*saṃkappa*) conveys the sense of thorough-designing. And fixation is the applying the selective mind to the object. Next, "focussing" is a term for "strong fixation," intensified by a prefix. Then, "uplift of mind" [application of the mind] is the elevating or setting up of consciousness on to an object. And "right intention" is intention which is praiseworthy, which has won to a moral state because of its veracity and progressiveness.[3]

The explicative phrase which reveals most about the actual nature and function of *vitakka* is the expression *cetaso abhiniropanā*, "the application of mind," which is explained as the lifting or mounting of consciousness onto the object. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* singles out this aspect as the primary characteristic of *vitakka* and illustrates it with a brief analogy:

> Its [main] characteristic is the lifting of consciousness on to the object; having an object, it lifts consciousness up to it. As someone depending on a relative or friend dear to the king ascends the king's palace, so depending on initial application the mind ascends the object. Therefore it has been said that initial application lifts the mind on to the object.[4]

This function of applying the mind to the object seems to be the unifying element underlying the different modes in which *vitakka* occurs, giving it a single quality despite the diversity of its applications. In the processes of discursive thinking, thought-conception, and imagination the operation of *vitakka* may be more conspicuous than in other cognitive processes. But wherever it occurs its directive function is at work, becoming especially prominent in the first *jhāna*, where discursive thought has subsided but *vitakka* remains.

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[1] MN. 3:73.

[2] *Psy. Ethics*, pp. 10-11. "Yo tasmim samaye takko vitakko, saṃkappo, appanā, byappanā, cetaso abhiniropanā, sammā saṃkappo, ayaṃ tasmiṃ samaye vitakko hoti." Dhs., p. 18.

[3] *Expositor*, 1:189. "Balavatara takkassetaṃ nāmaṃ. Suṭṭhu kappanavasena saṃkappo. Ekaggaṃ cittaṃ ārammaṇe appetīti appanā. Dutiyapadaṃ upasaggavasena vaḍḍhitaṃ. Balavatarā vā appanā byappanā. Ārammaṇe cittaṃ abhiniropeti cetaso abhiniropanā. Yathāvatāya niyyānikatāya ca kusalabhāvappatto pasattho saṃkappoti sammāsamkappo." Dhs.A., p. 187.

[4] *Expositor*, 1:151. "Svāyaṃ ārammaṇe cittassa abhiniropanalakkhaṇo. So hi ārammaṇe cittaṃ āropeti. Yathā hi koci rājavallabhaṃ ñātiṃ vā mittaṃ vā nissāya rājagehaṃ ārohati. Evaṃ vitakkaṃ nissāya cittaṃ ārammaṇaṃ ārohati." Dhs.A., p. 157.

In an illuminating discussion, Shwe Zan Aung shows how the directing of the mind and its concomitants to an object is the elemental meaning of *vitakka*, applicable in every case where its operation is discernible. Aung explains:

> [In cognition of sense objects] the element of *vitakka* is present as a directing of concomitant elements to a sensible object. In imagination *vitakka* directs to an image; in conception, to an idea; in symbolical conception, to a concept; in judgments (*vinicchaya-vīthi*), to a proposition; in reasoning (*takkavīthi*), alluded to, but not discussed in my Essay (it belongs to the province of logic), to a syllogism or an inference. In doubt, *vitakka* is a directing now to one object, now to another, back again, etc. In distraction *vitakka* is a directing of mind to several objects one after another. In first *jhāna*, *vitakka* is a directing of mind to the 'after-image' etc., and in transcendental consciousness, *vitakka* is a directing of mind to *nibbāna*, the Ideal. So engaged it is called *sammā-saṃkappa*, perfect aspiration.[1]

A problem seems to arise from the fact that, according to the abhidhammic system of analysis, *vitakka* is not a universal concomitant of consciousness. It is not present in every state of consciousness. So the question arises how, in those states of consciousness devoid of *vitakka*, the mind can be mounted onto its object. The commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya answers that when *vitakka* is absent the mind is directed upon its object through its own nature (*attano dhammatāya*), without dependence on other states.[2] At the level of the second *jhāna*, after *vitakka* has subsided, the mind remains focussed on its object even more intensely than before, despite the absence of *vitakka*. The Majjhima Nikāya subcommentary explains that a state of mind without *vitakka* can mount upon the object by the power of *vitakka* itself through the force of previous experience. Just as a person who has become familiar with a king can enter his dwelling freely without hesitation, so the mind which has gained experience of the object by means of *vitakka* can remain focussed on the object even after *vitakka* has left the mind.[3]

Vitakka: B. Specific

Vitakka can be divided into two kinds – the wholesome (*kusala*) and the unwholesome (*akusala*). We will now examine each of these two types of *vitakka*, beginning with the unwholesome, then deal with *vitakka* in the specific context of the first *jhāna* and as a factor in the supramundane path.

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[1] Anuruddha, *Compendium of Philosophy*, *Being a Translation Now made for the First Time from the 0riginal Pali of the Abhidhammattha Saṇgaha.* Translated with Introductory Notes and essay by Shwe Zan Aung. Revised and edited by Mrs. Rhys Davids (Pali Text Society Translation Series, vol. 2; London: H. Frowde, 1910-63), p. 238 (hereafter cited as *Compendium*).

[2] MN.A. 4:93.

[3] MN.T. 3:307.

Akusala Vitakka

In itself *vitakka* is neither unwholesome (*akusala*) nor wholesome (*kusala*). It is merely the intrinsically indeterminate function of directing the mind and its concomitants onto the object. Its moral quality is determined by its associated factors, especially its underlying roots. When it is associated with the unwholesome roots – greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) – it becomes unwholesome *vitakka*, When it is associated with the wholesome roots – non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*) – it becomes wholesome *vitakka*. The *vitakka* influenced by these roots can reach expression physically as unwholesome bodily action (*akusalakāyakamma*) or verbally as unwholesome verbal action (*akusalavacīkamma*). If it does not express itself outwardly it remains internal pertaining to unwholesome mental action (*akusalamanokamma*).

Unwholesome *vitakkas* are enumerated in the suttas as threefold: thoughts of sensuality (*kāmavitakka*), thoughts of ill will (*byāpādavitakka*), and thoughts of harming (*vihiṅsāvitakka*). The former is thought rooted in the factor of greed; the latter two are differing expressions of thought rooted in hatred or aversion. In describing his practice during his search for enlightenment the Buddha explains that he divided *vitakkas* into two categories, the wholesome and the unwholesome. On the unwholesome side he placed thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of harming. Whenever one of these thoughts would arise in him he would dispel it by reflecting that these thoughts lead to the harm of oneself, to the harm of others, and to the harm of both; they are destructive of wisdom, conduce to vexation, and lead away from *nibbāna*.[1] He then explains that whenever one frequently thinks and ponders on these unwholesome thoughts, the mind inclines to them and makes them habitual.[2]

Unwholesome thoughts (*akusalavitakka*) are also called unwholesome intentions (*akusalasaṃkappa*), the words *vitakka* and *saṃkappa* being used interchangeably. Thus the Buddha also declares that there are three unwholesome intentions – namely, intentions for sense pleasures, for ill will, and for harming. In the Samanamaṇḍikā Sutta the Buddha states that these unwholesome intentions originate from perception:

> And how, carpenter, do these unskilled intentions originate? Their origination is spoken of too. It should be answered that their origination is in perception. Which perception, for perceptions are many, various, diverse? Perception of sense-pleasure, perception of malevolence, perception of harming – originating from these are unskilled intentions.[3]

In the Saṃyutta Nikāya the Buddha explains that intentions of sensuality arise in dependence on sensual perceptions and issue in sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), the fever of sensuality (*kāmapariḷāha*), and the search for sensual gratification (*kāmapariyesanā*).

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[1] MN. 1:115-18.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] MLS. 2:226. “Ime ca, ṭhapati, akusalasaṃkappā kiṃ samuṭṭhānā? Samuṭṭhānā pi nesaṃ vuttaṃ. Saññāsamuṭṭhānā ti’ssa vacanīyaṃ. Katamā saññā? Saññā pi hi bahu anekavidhā nānappakārikā, kāmasaññā byāpādasaññā vihiṃsā saññā; itosamuṭṭhānā akusalasaṃkappā.” MN. 2:27.

Engaged in this sensual search the worldling practices wrongly in three ways: by body, speech, and mind. The same pattern is repeated for intentions of ill will and intentions of harming.[1]

Beyond these three, other minor types of unwholesome thoughts are spoken of in an unspecified way as "evil unwholesome thoughts" (*pāpakā akusalā vitakkā*). The Buddha declares that the suppression and elimination of all unwholesome thoughts and intentions is one of the essential disciplines of the spiritual life. He says that a monk in training

> ... wisely reflective, does not give in to thought about sense pleasures that has arisen, he gets rid of it, he eliminates it, makes an end of it, sends it to its ceasing; he does not give in to malevolent thought... to thought of harming... to evil unskilled mental objects that have constantly arisen, he gets rid of them, eliminates them, makes an end of them, sends them to their ceasing.[2]

He also states that when unwholesome perceptions arise in a recluse or brahmin, if he does not quickly dispel them and eliminate them "he both fares ill here, with trouble, despair, yearning, and at the separation of the body, after death, has to expect a bad destiny."[3]

In striving for *jhāna*, a yogin will have to eliminate all unwholesome *vitakkas*. These will be the *vitakkas* associated with the five hindrances. The *vitakka* associated with the first hindrance, sensual desire, is clearly thought of sense pleasures. Thoughts of ill will and thoughts of harming will cluster around the hindrance of ill will. The *vitakkas* connected with the remaining hindrances can be seen as comprised in the "evil, unwholesome states" which a monk has to overcome in the course of his training. The texts record several minor distracting thoughts as "thoughts about relatives, thoughts about one's district, and thoughts about one's reputation."[4] The Buddha declares that all unwholesome thoughts cease without remainder in the first *jhāna*, the practice for eliminating unwholesome thoughts being the four right endeavors – the endeavor to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to prevent unarisen unwholesome states from arising, to arouse unarisen wholesome states, and to develop arisen wholesome states.[5]

Kusala Vitakka

Kusala vitakka or wholesome thought occurs at three levels:

(a) the wholesome thought of ordinary morally virtuous states of consciousness,

(b) the wholesome thought of the first *jhāna*, and

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[1] KS. 2:105-106. SN. 2:150-51.

[2] MLS. 1:15. "… paṭisamkhā yoniso uppannaṃ kāmavitakkaṃ nādhivāseti pajahati vinodeti byantikaroti anabhāvam gameti,… byāpādavitakkaṃ…, vihiṃsāvitakkaṃ… uppannuppanne pāpake akusale dhamme nādhivāseti pajahati vinodeti byantikaroti anabhāvaṃ gameti." MN. 1:11.

[3] KS. 2:106. SN. 2:152.

[4] GS. 1:232. "Ñātivitakko janapada vitakko anavaññatti paṭisaṃyutto vitakko." AN. 3:254.

[5] MN. 2:27.

(c) the wholesome thought of the supramundane path consciousness present as noble right intention (*ariya sammā saṃkappa*).

Ordinary kusala vitakka

Vitakka becomes wholesome in association with the three wholesome roots, of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. Kammically wholesome thoughts that do not directly involve a higher spiritual experience are analyzed in the suttas as threefold: thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhammavitakka*), thoughts of benevolence (*abyāpādavitakka*), and thoughts of harmlessness (*avihiṅsāvitakka*). These three are the direct antitheses of the three unwholesome thoughts. The thought of renunciation opposes the thought of sensuality, the thought of benevolence the thought of ill will, the thought of harmlessness the thought of harming. The Buddha explains that when he was a Bodhisatta he established a category of wholesome thoughts into which he put the three thoughts of renunciation, benevolence, and harmlessness. He understood that these thoughts conduce neither to the harm of oneself, to the harm of others, or to the harm of both, that they lead to the growth of wisdom, to freedom from vexation, and to the attainment of *nibbāna*. Moreover, he declares, by thinking and pondering on the thought of renunciation one can expel thoughts of sensuality; by thinking thoughts of benevolence one can expel thoughts of ill will; and by thinking thoughts of harmlessness one can expel thoughts of harming.[1]

Wholesome thoughts are also spoken of in the suttas under the name "wholesome intentions" (*kusalasaṃkappa*), which are of the same threefold nature.[2] The Buddha declares that the intention of renunciation originates from the perception of renunciation (*nekkhammasaññā*). It issues in the desire for renunciation (*nekkhammacchanda*), the yearning for renunciation (*nekkhammapariḷāha*), and the search for renunciation (*nekkhammapariyesanā*). Engaged in this search the noble disciple practices rightly in three ways: by body, speech, and mind. The same pattern is repeated for intentions of benevolence and harmlessness.[3]

In the Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta the Buddha recommends five methods of using wholesome thoughts (*kusalavitakka*) to overcome unwholesome thoughts (*akusalavitakka*), here classified by way of their roots as connected with desire, hatred, and delusion. One method involves applying a wholesome thought to eliminate the unwholesome thought directly opposed to it:

> Like an experienced carpenter or carpenter's apprentice, striking hard at, pushing out, and getting rid of a coarse peg with a fine one, should the bhikkhu in order to get rid of the adventitious object, reflect on a different object which is connected with skill. Then the evil unskillful thoughts connected with desire, hate and delusion are eliminated; they disappear. By

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[1] MLS. 1:150. MN. 1:116.

[2] MLS. 2:227. MN. 2:27.

[3] KS. 2:106. SN. 2:151-52.

> their elimination, the mind stands firm, settles down, becomes unified, and concentrated, just within (his subject of meditation).[1]

The other four ways of overcoming unwholesome thoughts are

(i) pondering on their disadvantages (*ādīnava*),

(ii) trying not to pay any attention to them,

(iii) reflecting on the removal of the [thought] source of those unskilful thoughts, and

(iv) with clenched teeth and tongue pressing the palate, restraining, subduing, and beating down the [evil] mind by the [good] mind.[2]

This advice is given to a bhikkhu who is training himself to attain the higher consciousness (*adhicitta*), an equivalent term for *jhāna*. When unwholesome thoughts arise from time to time hindering his progress, he can develop wholesome thoughts to overcome them. The commentary explains that he should reflect on an unlovely object (*asubhanimitta*) in order to overcome lustful thought connected with living beings and on impermanence in order to overcome thoughts of desire connected with inanimate objects. He should cultivate loving kindness in order to overcome hatred towards living beings and on the modes of materiality (*dhātumanasikāro*) to overcome hatred towards inanimate objects.[3]

Kusalavitakka in jhāna

The general function of *vitakka*, as we have seen, is to direct the mind and its associated factors onto the object. In *jhāna* this function becomes stronger and more pronounced than on other occasions. On occasions of *jhānic* consciousness it would perhaps be more exact to say that *vitakka* thrusts its concomitants into the object rather than that it directs them onto the object. The *Visuddhimagga* thus characterizes the function of *jhānic vitakka* to be "to strike at and thresh – for the meditator is said, in virtue of it, to have the object struck at by applied thought, threshed by applied thought."[4]

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[1] Soma Thera, Comp. trans. and ed., *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts*, *Vitakka-Saṇṭhāna Sutta. A Discourse of the Buddha* (*Majjhima-Nikāya No. 20*). (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1960), p. 1. "Seyyathāpi bhikkhave dakkho palagaṇḍo vā palagaṇḍantevāsī vā sukhumāya āṇiyā olārikaṃ āṇiṃ abhinīhaneyya, abhinivajjeyya – evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave bhikkhuno yaṃ nimittaṃ āgamma yaṃ nimittaṃ manasikaroto uppajjanti pāpakā akusalā vitakkā chandūpasaṃhitā pi, dosūpasaṃhitā pi mohūpasaṃhitā pi, tena bhikkhave bhikkhunā tamhā nimittā aññaṃ nimittaṃ manasikātabbaṃ kusalūpasaṃhitaṃ; tassa tamhā nimittā aññaṃ nimittaṃ manasikaroto kusalūpasaṃhitaṃ ye pāpakā akusalā vitakkā chandūpasaṃhitā… te pahīyanti te abbhatthaṃ gacchanti, tesaṃ pahānā ajjhattaṃ eva cittaṃ santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodi hoti samādhiyati." MN. 1:119.

[2] *Ibid.* 119ff.

[3] Reflection on materiality (*dhātumanasikāra*) means the reflection on the elements of which all tangible objects are made. When one reflects on the basic material elements one would realize that no one particular element is responsible for the cause of his anger. This realization helps him eliminate hatred toward material objects.

[4] PP., p. 148. "Āhanana-pariyāhananaraso, tathā hi tena yogāvacaro ārammaṇaṃ vitakkāhataṃ vitakkapariyāhataṃ karotī ti vuccati." Vism., p. 114.

In the context of *jhāna*, *vitakka* is qualified by another term, *appanā*, meaning absorption. The *Milindapañha* states this quality of absorption to be the salient characteristic of *vitakka*: "*Vitakka*, your majesty, has the characteristic of absorption. Just as a carpenter drives (*appeti*) a well-fashioned piece of wood into a joint so *vitakka* has the characteristic of absorption."[1] (Wr. tr.). Shwe Zan Aung makes explicit the distinction between *vitakka* in ordinary states of consciousness and *vitakka* on occasions of *jhāna* as follows:

> Ordinary *vitakka* merely throws its concomitants onto the surface, so to speak, of an object – i.e., it is the initiative element in cognition of a superficial kind. But *appana-vitakka* is mind penetrating into the inwardness or import of its object, and it has come to be applied to *samādhi*, 'concentration' or developed individualization of thought.[2]

Vitakka at the level of absorption is compared to a solid body, which sinks to the bottom of water and remains fixed there; the *vitakka* of ordinary consciousness is compared to a hollow ball which stays under the water when held down by pressure but rises to the surface when the pressure is removed.[3] The word *appanā* used to define *vitakka* comes to be applied to concentration of the *jhānic* level, called *appanā samādhi* or "absorption-concentration" in contrast to the pre-jhānic concentration called *upacāra samādhi* or "access concentration."

The object of *jhāna* into which *vitakka* thrusts the mind and its concomitants is the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāganimitta*). We already met this object in our discussion of the suppression of the hindrances, but its nature must now be further clarified. When a meditator begins his practice for the attainment of *jhāna*, he takes a preliminary object such as a colored or elemental *kasiṇa* and concentrates on it until he is able to visualize it with his eyes closed as clearly as when he looks at it with eyes open. Whenever he notices that the object is not clear he should open his eyes and look at the object again until he is able to build up a clear mental impression of its mode of appearance. Then, remembering the appearance of the object, he should shut his eyes again and repeat the process of visualization as long as is required. When the object comes into focus when he attends to it with eyes shut as clearly as it does when he looks at it with open eyes the learning sign (*uggahanimitta*) is said to have arisen.[4] At this point the yogin should leave off the physical object and focus solely on the learning sign, developing it "by reiterated reaction to it and by striking at it with applied thought and sustained thought."[5]

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1. "Appanālakkhaṇo mahārāja vitakko. Yathā mahārāja vaḍḍhakī suparikammakataṃ dāruṃ sandhismiṃ appeti, evaṃ kho mahārāja appanālakkhaṇo vitakkho'ti" V. Trenckner, ed. *The Milindapañho, Being Dialogues Between King Milinda and the Buddhist Sage Nagasena* (Pali Text Society Publication Series no. 69; London: Luzac & Co., for the Pali Text Society, 1880-1962), p. 62 (hereafter cited as Milp.).

2. *Compendium*, p. 57.

3. *Ibid*.

4. PP., p. 130. Vism., pp. 101-102.

5. PP., p. 130. Vism., pp. 101-102.

As he practices thus the *jhāna* factors grow in strength, each suppressing its respective hindrance. *Vitakka*, as we saw, counters the hindrance of sloth and torpor, eventually reducing it to a state of complete suppression. When the hindrances are suppressed and the defilements subside the mind enters access concentration. At this time the learning sign is replaced by the counterpart sign. The *Visuddhimagga* explains the difference between the two signs thus:

> In the learning sign any fault in the kasina is apparent. But the counterpart sign appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, and a hundred times, a thousand times, more purified, like a looking-glass disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like the moon's disk coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thunder cloud. But it has neither colour nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension [by insight] and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance.[1]

The counterpart sign is the object of both access concentration and *jhāna*. The difference between the latter two consists, not in their object, but in the strength of their respective *jhāna* factors. In the former the *jhāna* factors are still weak and not yet fully developed. In the latter they are developed to the point where they can actually thrust the mind into the object with the force of full absorption. In this process of thrusting, the factor most responsible for bringing about the mind's absorption in the counterpart sign is the factor of *vitakka*.

Since *vitakka* in *jhāna* is associated with the wholesome roots, it will take form as a wholesome thought of renunciation, of benevolence and of harmlessness. Its occurrence in these modes stems from the abandonment of the hindrances of sensual desire and ill will, the defilements responsible for the three unwholesome thoughts of sensuality, ill will, and harming. Since *vitakka* is needed to directly counter the hindrance opposite to itself, it performs the task of suppressing sloth and torpor. And since *vitakka* has the general function of directing the mind to the object, it will also thrust the mind into the counterpart sign, keeping it fixed and focussed there with the intensity of absorption-concentration.

Kusalavitakka in the Noble Path

The highest form of wholesome *vitakka* is the *vitakka* included in the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path, with its eight factors, operates at two levels – the mundane and the supramundane. The mundane (*lokiya*) path is developed on occasions of wholesome consciousness when the aspirant is striving to reach penetration of the

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[1] PP., p. 130. "Uggahanimitte kasiṇadoso paññāyati. Paṭibhāganimittaṃ, thavikato nihatādāsamaṇḍalaṃ viya, suddhotasaṅkhathalaṃ viya, valāhakantarā nikkhantacandamaṇḍalaṃ viya, meghamukhe balākā viya, uggahanimittaṃ padāletvā nikkhantaṃ iva tato sataguṇaṃ sahassaguṇaṃ suparisuddhaṃ hutvā upaṭṭhāti. Taṃ ca kho pana n'eva vaṇṇavantaṃ, na saṇṭhānavantaṃ. Yadi hi taṃ īdisaṃ bhaveyya, cakkhuviññeyyaṃ siyā oḷārikaṃ sammasanūpagaṃ tilakkhaṇabhāhataṃ. Na pan'etaṃ tādisaṃ. Kevalaṃ hi samādhilābhino upaṭṭhānākāramattaṃ saññājaṃ etan ti." Vism., p. 102.

Four Noble Truths and to eradicate defilements. The supramundane (*lokutara*) path arises when the practice is fully mature. When this path arises it penetrates the four truths by realizing *nibbāna* as its object, simultaneously eradicating defilements.

Wholesome *vitakka* figures on both levels of the noble path as *sammāsaṃkappa*, "right intention", the second factor of the path. At the mundane stage it is the threefold wholesome thought of renunciation, benevolence, and harmlessness. At the supramundane level it is the directive factor of consciousness which thrusts the mind upon its object, in this case *nibbāna*, the unconditioned element. The Buddha clarifies the twofold division of right intention in the Mahācattārīsaka Sutta as follows:

> And what, monks, is the right purpose that has cankers, is on the side of merit, and ripens unto cleaving? Purpose for renunciation, purpose for non-ill will, purpose for nonharming. This, monks, is right purpose that... ripens unto cleaving.
>
> And what, monks, is the right purpose that is ariyan, cankerless, supermundane, a component of the Way? Whatever, monks, is reasoning, initial thought, purpose, an activity of speech through the complete focussing and application of the mind in one who, by developing the ariyan Way, is of ariyan thought, of cankerless thought, and is conversant with the ariyan Way – this, monks, is right purpose that is ariyan, cankerless, supermundane, a component of the Way.[1]

Right intention in this latter sense is still a wholesome thought of renunciation, benevolence, and harmlessness, since it is associated with non-greed and non-hatred. Its primary characteristic, however, is its ability to lead the mind into absorption upon its supramundane object. Therefore it is this aspect which the Buddha emphasizes in his definition of the ariyan *sammāsaṃkappa*.

Vicāra

Although the word *vicāra* and its derivatives almost invariably appear in the suttas in conjunction with the word *vitakka* and its derivatives, the use of two distinct terms and the occasional recognition that one can occur without the other suggest that they represent different aspects of the thought-process. Since *vicāra* always comes after *vitakka* it would seem to be a more developed phase of thought, and this suspicion is borne out by the Abhidhamma and commentaries. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi defines *vicāra* thus:

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[1] MLS. 3:116. "Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammāsaṃkappo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko? Nekkhammasaṃkappo, avyāpādasaṃkappo avihiṃsāsaṃkappo – ayaṃ, bhikkhave sammāsaṃkappo sāsavo puññaabhāgiyo upadhivepakko.

Katamo ca bhikkhave, sammāsaṃkappo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo? Yo kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggassa samaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato takko vitakko saṃkappo appanā vyappanā cetaso abhiniropanā vācīsaṃkharo, ayaṃ bhikkhave sammāsaṃkappo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo." MN. 3:73.

> The process, the sustained procedure (*vicāra*), the progress and access [of the mind] which on that occasion is the [continuous] adjusting and focusing of thought – this is discursive thought that there then is.[1]

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* and *Visuddhimagga* clarify this somewhat cryptic definition by analyzing *vicāra* in terms of its characteristic, function, and manifestation:

> Sustained thinking (*vicaraṇa*) is sustained thought (*vicāra*); continued sustainment (*anusañcaraṇa*), is what is meant. It has the characteristic of continued pressure on (occupation with) the object. Its function is to keep conascent [mental] states [occupied] with that. It is manifested as keeping consciousness anchored [on that object].[2]

From this explanation several features of *vicāra* emerge. Firstly, by way of etymology, *vicāra* connotes continued movement; thus it is the mind's continued movement in focussing upon the object. Secondly, by way of function, *vicāra* performs the task of fixing the mind and its states upon the object; it keeps them anchored there, sustaining the work of mental application effected by *vitakka*. And thirdly, *vicāra* plays the role of examination. Through its sustainment of the mind on the object it enables the mind to inspect, examine and investigate the object's properties. As Shwe Zan Aung says: "*Vicāra* is the continued exercise of the mind on that object."[3] And again: "*Vicāra* may largely operate in the stage of investigation and other processes, and would strongly operate in all processes of comparison or discrimination."[4]

The commentaries spell out the differences between *vitakka* and *vicāra* as follows:

> And though sometimes not separate, applied thought is the first impact of the mind in the sense that it is both gross and inceptive like the striking of a bell. Sustained thought is the act of keeping the mind anchored, in the sense that it is subtle with the individual essence of continued pressure, like the ringing of the bell.[5]

Buddhaghosa gives six analogies to illustrate the relationship between *vitakka* and *vicāra*.

1. *Vitakka* is analogous to the movement of a bird taking off into the air by flapping its wings, *vicāra* to its moving through the air gracefully and leisurely with outspread wings.

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[1] *Psy. Ethics*, p. 11. "Yo tasmiṃ samaye cāro vicāro anuvicāro upavicāro cittassa anusandhānatā anupekkhanatā. Ayaṃ tasmiṃ samaye vicāro hoti." Dhs., p. 18.

[2] PP., p. 148. Vism., p. 114. "Vicaraṇaṃ va vicāro. Anusañcaranaṇti vuttaṃ hoti. Svāyaṃ ārammaṇānumajjanalakkhaṇo. Tatha sahajatānuyojana raso. Cittassa anuppabandhapaccupaṭṭhāno." Dhs.A., p. 158.

[3] *Compendium*, p. 17.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 40.

[5] PP., p. 148. "Sante pi ca nesaṃ katthaci avippayoge, oḷārikaṭṭhena pubbaṅgamaṭṭhena ca ghaṇṭābhighāto viya cetaso paṭhamābhinipāto vitakko; sukhumaṭṭhena anumajjanasabhāvena ca ghaṇṭānuravo viya anuppabandho vicāro." Vism., p. 115.

2. *Vitakka* is comparable to a bee's flying towards a flower, *vicāra* to its buzzing around the flower.
3. *Vitakka* is like the striking of a bell, *vicāra* like its reverberation.
4. *Vitakka* is like the hand that holds firmly a tarnished metal dish that has to be cleaned; *vicāra* is like the other hand that rubs it with powder, oil, and a woolen pad.
5. *Vitakka* is like the supporting hand of a potter when he is making a pot, *vicāra* like the hand that moves back and forth.
6. *Vitakka* is like the compass pin that stays fixed to the center when one is drawing a circle, *vicāra* like the pin that revolves around.[1]

These similes make it clear that despite their constant concomitance, *vitakka* and *vicāra* perform different tasks, the former having a functional priority over the latter. *Vitakka* brings the mind to the object, *vicāra* fixes and anchors it there. *Vitakka* focuses the mind on the object, *vicāra* examines and inspects what is focussed on. *Vitakka* brings a deepening of concentration by again and again leading the mind back to the same object, *vicāra* sustains the concentration achieved by keeping the mind anchored on that object. In their union they are indispensable for the achievement and stabilization of the first *jhāna*.

Pīti

The third *jhāna* factor present in the first *jhāna* is *pīti*, usually translated "joy" or "rapture". The Venerable Ñānamoli, in his translation of the *Visuddhimagga*, renders it by "happiness", but this rendering seems misleading since most translators use "happiness" as an English equivalent for *sukha*, the quality of pleasurable feeling present in the *jhāna* as its fourth factor. We will render *pīti* by "rapture", thus maintaining the connection of the term with ecstatic meditative experience.

In the suttas *pīti* is sometimes said to arise from another aligned quality called *pāmojja*, translated as "joy" or "gladness." Thus the Buddha states that with virtuous rules of conduct as support, freedom from remorse (*avippaṭisāra*) arises; freedom from remorse leads to gladness, gladness to rapture, and rapture to tranquility (*passaddhi*).[2]

Again, he says that faith leads to gladness, gladness to rapture, and rapture to tranquility.[3] Gladness arises from seeing the abandonment of the hindrances. The Buddha says that when the disciple sees the five hindrances abandoned in himself "gladness (*pāmojja*) springs up within him on his realising that, and joy (*pīti*) arises to him thus gladdened, and so rejoicing all his frame becomes at ease."[4] Tranquility (*passaddhi*) follows rapture and leads to a feeling of happiness (*sukha*), on the basis of which the mind becomes concentrated, entering the first *jhāna*. Thus we can see that rapture precedes the actual arising of the first *jhāna*, but persists through the remaining stages and continues on as a *jhāna* factor up to the third *jhāna*.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] GS. 5:5. AN. 5:4-5.

[3] KS. 2:26-27. SN. 2:30

[4] Dial. 1:84. DN. 1:73.

For an analytic treatment of *pīti*, we must turn to the Abhidhamma piṭaka and the commentaries. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi defines the term thus:

> What on that occasion is joy (*pīti*)? The joy which on that occasion is gladness, rejoicing at, rejoicing over, mirth and merriment, felicity, exultation, transport of mind – this is the joy that there then is.[1]

The commentaries pinpoint *pīti* in terms of its verbal derivation, characteristic, function, and manifestation:

> It refreshes (*pīnayati*), thus it is [rapture]. It has the characteristic of endearing. Its function is to refresh the body and the mind, or its function is to pervade (thrill with rapture). It is manifested as elation.[2]

Rapture is closely associated with happiness (*sukha*), but remains different in nature. Happiness is a feeling and thus belongs to the aggregate of feelings (*vedanākkhandha*). Rapture, on the other hand, belongs to the aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*). It is not hedonic but directive, referring to the object of consciousness. Shwe Zan Aung explains that "*pīti* abstracted means interest of varying degrees of intensity, in an object felt as desirable, or as calculated to bring happiness."[3] When defined in terms of agency *pīti* is that which creates interest in the object; when defined in terms of its nature it is the interest created in the object. The Abhidhamma subcommentaries state: "It is said that *pīti* has, as its characteristic mark, grasping the object qua desirable."[4] Because it creates a positive interest in the object, the *jhāna* factor of *pīti* is able to counter and suppress the hindrance of ill will. Ill will is a state of aversion implying a negative evaluation of the object. When *pīti* as pleasurable interest arises in the object it supplants the negative tendency towards aversion.

Both the *Visuddhimagga* and *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* present a gradation of *pīti* into five categories: minor rapture (*khuddikā pīti*), momentary rapture (*khaṇikā pīti*), showering rapture (*okkantikā pīti*), uplifting rapture (*ubbegā pīti*), and pervading rapture (*pharaṇā pīti*).[5] Of these five types, minor rapture is said to be able to raise the hairs on the body. Momentary rapture is like lightning produced moment by moment. Flooding rapture descends on the body and disappears like the waves breaking on the seashore. Transporting rapture is able to lift the physical body and cause it to move from one place to another. All-pervading rapture pervades the whole body. To illustrate the power of uplifting rapture, the commentaries relate the story of the elder Mahātissa, who "aroused

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1. *Psy. Ethics*, p. 12. "Katamā tasmiṃ samaye pīti hoti? Yā tasmiṃ samaye pīti pāmojjaṃ āmodanā pamodanā hāso pahāso vitti odagyaṃ attamanatā cittassa; ayaṃ tasmiṃ samaye pīti hoti." Dhs., p. 18.

2. PP., p. 149. "Pītisukhaṃ ti ettha pīnayati ti piti. Sā saṃpiyāyanalakkhanā; kāyacittapīnanarasā, pharaṇarasā vā; odagyapaccupaṭṭhānā." Vism., P. 115.

3. Compendium, p. 243.

4. "Ārammaṇaṃ kallato gahana lakkhaṇā ti vuttaṃ." *Three Ṭikas*, p. 75. [quoted in Compendium, p. 243].

5. PP., p. 149. Vism., pp. 115-16. Dhs.A., p. 158.

uplifting [rapture] with the Enlightened One as object, and rose into the air like a painted ball bounced off a plastered floor.”[1] They also relate the story of a young girl who aroused uplifting rapture while contemplating the thought of a shrine and travelled to the shrine through the air, arriving before her parents who went there by foot.[2]

The five kinds of rapture are evidently ranked in degrees of intensity, minor rapture representing the weakest degree and all-pervading rapture the strongest. The five in sequence bring about the gradual perfection of concentration:

> Now this fivefold [rapture], when conceived and matured perfects the twofold tranquility, that is, bodily and mental tranquility. When tranquility is conceived and matured, it perfects the twofold bliss, that is, bodily and mental bliss. When bliss is conceived and matured, it perfects the threefold concentration, that is, momentary concentration, access concentration, and absorption concentration.[3]

Minor rapture is generally the first to appear in the progressive development of meditation, coming into being as defilements subside and the meditator experiences indications of successful concentration. Momentary rapture comes next. Though stronger in its impact than the earlier grade, momentary rapture, as its name indicates, is still ephemeral and cannot be sustained for long. Showering rapture runs through the body, producing a great thrill but without leaving a lasting impact. Uplifting rapture is more sustained but still tends to disturb concentration. The form of rapture most conducive to the deepening of concentration is all-pervading rapture. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* describes the effect of this rapture thus: “When all-pervading rapture arises, the whole body is completely surcharged, blown like a full bladder or like a mountain cavern pouring forth a mighty flood of water.”[4] The *Visuddhimagga* states that what is intended by the *jhāna* factor of rapture is this all-pervading rapture, “which is the root of absorption and comes by growth into association with absorption.”[5]

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1. PP., pp 149-50. Vism., p. 116. Dhs.A., pp. 158-59.

2. *Ibid.*

3. PP., p. 150. “Sā pan’esā pañcavidhā pīti gabbhaṃ gaṇhantī paripākaṃ gacchantī duvidhaṃ passaddhiṃ paripūreti, kāyapassaddhiṃ ca cittapassaddhiṃ ca. Passaddhi gabbhaṃ gaṇhantī paripākaṃ gacchantī duvidhaṃ pi sukhaṃ paripūreti, kāyikaṃ ca cetasikaṃ ca. Sukhaṃ gabbhaṃ gaṇhantaṃ paripākaṃ gacchantaṃ tividhaṃ samādhiṃ paripūreti, khaṇikasamādhiṃ, upacāra samādhiṃ, appanāsamādhiṃ ti.” Vism., p. 117.

4. *Expositor*, 1:154. “Pharaṇa pītiyā pana uppannāya sakala sarīraṃ dhamitvā pūritavaṭṭi viya mahatā udakoghena pakkhandappatakucchi viya ca anuparipphātaṃ hoti.” Dhs.A., p. 160.

5. PP., p. 151. “Tāsu yā appaṇā samādhissa mūlaṃ hutvā vaḍḍhamānā samādhisampayogamgatā pharaṇa pīti, ayaṃ imasmiṃ atthe adhippetā pītī ti.” Vism., p. 117.

Sukha

The next *jhāna* factor is *sukha* (happiness). The word "*sukha*" is used both as a noun meaning "happiness", "ease", "bliss", or "pleasure", and as an adjective meaning "blissful" or "pleasant". The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* presents a number of canonical uses of the term: "sukha" can mean pleasurable feeling (*sukhavedanā*), the root of happiness (*sukhamūlā*), pleasurable object (*sukhārammaṇā*), a cause of happiness (*sukhahetu*), an objective station occasioning happiness (*sukhapaccayaṭṭhānā*), freedom from trouble (*abyāpajjha*), *nibbānic* happiness, etc.[1] In most contexts *sukha* means pleasurable feeling. When it is said "The arising of the Buddhas is *sukha*,"[2] *sukha* means root or basis of happiness. In the passage "Since, O Mahāli, form is *sukha*, falls and descends on *sukha*,"[3] the word signifies a pleasurable object. In the statement "Merit, monks, is a synonym for *sukha*,"[4] *sukha* means a cause of happiness. When it is said: "They know not *sukha* who see not Nandana,"[5] *sukha* signifies a station (or plane of existence) occasioning happiness. In the statement "These states constitute a *sukha* life in this very world,"[6] *sukha* means freedom from troubles. And in the phrase "*Nibbāna* is the supreme sukha,"[7] *sukha* is nibbanic happiness.

As a factor of the first *jhāna sukha* signifies felt happiness or pleasant feeling. The word is explicitly defined in this sense in the Vibhaṅga's analysis of the first *jhāna*: "Therein, what is happiness? Mental pleasure, mental happiness, the felt pleasure and happiness born of mind-contact, pleasurable and happy feeling born of mind-contact – this is called 'happiness'."[8] (Wr. tr.). The *Visuddhimagga* explains that happiness in the first *jhāna* has the characteristic of gratifying, the function of intensifying associated states, and as manifestation, the rendering of aid (to its associated states).[9]

To understand precisely the nature of the happiness present in the first *jhāna*, a brief discussion of the Buddhist analysis of feeling is necessary. Feeling (*vedanā*) is a mental factor present in all types of consciousness; that is, it is a universal concomitant of experience (*sabbacittasādhāraṇā cetasika*). Feeling has the characteristic of being felt (*vedayita lakkhaṇā*), the function of experiencing (*anubhavana rasā*), and as manifestation the gratification of the mental factors (*cetasika-assādapaccupaṭṭhānā*).[1] It is invariably said to be born of contact (*phassa*). Contact is the coming together (*saṅgati*) of a sense object, a sense faculty, and the appropriate type of consciousness. When these three come together consciousness makes contact with the object. It experiences the affective quality of the object, and from this experience a feeling arises keyed to the object's affective quality.[2]

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[1] *Expositor*, 1:52-53. Dhs.A., pp. 160-61.

[2] Ambalangoda Polvatte Buddhadatta Mahathera, trans. and ed., *Dhammapadam*: *An Anthology of Sayings of the Buddha*. (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Apothecaries Co., n.d.), v. 104 (hereafter cited as Dhp.).

[3] SN. 3:69.

[4] AN. 4:89.

[5] SN. 1:5,200.

[6] AN. 4:382.

[7] Dhp., vs. 203,204.

[8] "Tattha katamaṃ sukhaṃ? Yaṃ cetasikaṃ sukhaṃ cetosamphassajaṃ sukhaṃ vedayitaṃ cetosamphassajā sātā sukhā vedanā." Vibh., pp. 83-84.

[9] PP., p. 151. Vism., p. 117.

Since contact is of six kinds by way of the six sense faculties, feeling is also of six kinds corresponding to the six kinds of contact from which it is born. There is feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose, tongue, body, and mind-contact.[3] Feeling is also divided by way of its affective tone either into three or five classes. On the threefold division there is pleasant feeling (*sukhāvedanā*), painful feeling (*dukkhāvedanā*), and neither pleasant nor painful feeling (*adukkhamasukhā vedanā*), i.e., neutral feeling. The pleasant feeling may be subdivided into bodily pleasant feeling (*kāyika sukha*) called "pleasure" (*sukha*) and mental pleasant feeling (*cetasikasukha*) called "joy" (*somanassa*). The painful feeling may also be subdivided into bodily painful feeling (*kāyikadukkha*) called "pain" (*dukkha*) and mental painful feeling (*cetasikadukkha*) called "displeasure" (*domanassa*). In this system of classification the neutral feeling is called "equanimity" (*upekkhā*). Thus on the fivefold division we find the following five types of feeling: pleasure, joy, pain, displeasure, and equanimity.[4] According to the Abhidhamma, pleasure and pain are found only in association with body-consciousness, joy and displeasure only in association with mind-consciousness, and equanimity in association with both mind-consciousness and the other four classes of sense consciousness.[5]

The Vibhaṅga statement that the *sukha* of the first *jhāna* is mental happiness born of mind-contact means that it is a form of joy or *somanassa*. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya the Buddha enumerates contrasting types of mental happiness: the happiness of the household life and that of monastic life, the happiness of sense pleasures and that of renunciation, happiness with attachments and taints and happiness without attachments and taints, worldly happiness and spiritual happiness, the happiness of concentration and happiness without concentration, etc.[6] Happiness associated with greed and directed to pleasurable forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles is sensual happiness (*kāmasukha*). Happiness associated with the wholesome roots produced by the renunciation of sensual enjoyments is spiritual happiness (*nirāmisasukha*) or the happiness of renunciation (*nekkhammasukha*). The happiness of *jhāna* is a spiritual happiness born of seclusion from sense pleasures and the hindrances (*pavivekasukha*). It is also a happiness of concentration (*samādhisukha*).

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[1] *Expositor*, 1:145f. Dhs.A. pp. 83-84.

[2] MN. 3:242-43.

[3] SN. 2:3.

[4] MN. 1:398-400.

[5] Narada, *Manual*, pp. 143ff.

[6] AN. 1:80-81.

The Buddha shows that happiness is causally conditioned. It arises in the sequence of conditions issuing in liberation. In this sequence it follows rapture (*pīti*) and tranquility (*passaddhi*) and leads to concentration (*samādhi*). The Upanisā Sutta says: "Gladness is the supporting condition for rapture; rapture is the supporting condition for tranquility, tranquility for happiness, happiness for concentration."[1] (Wr. tr.). The commentary explains that "gladness" (*pāmojja*) represents the initial forms of rapture, "*pīti*" the stronger forms. "Tranquility" (*passaddhi*) is the calm that emerges through the subsiding of defilements; the happiness (*sukha*) to which it leads the commentary calls "the happiness preceding absorption"[2] and the subcommentary "the happiness pertaining to the access to *jhāna*".[3] The resulting concentration is the *pādakajjhāna*, the *jhāna* forming a basis for insight. From this we can infer that the happiness included in this causal sequence is the nascent *jhāna* factor of *sukha*, which begins to emerge in the access stage and reaches full maturity in the actual *jhāna* itself. But since *sukha* is always present whenever *pīti* is present, it follows that *sukha* must have arisen at the very beginning of the sequence. In the stage bearing its name it only acquires special prominence, not a first appearance. When happiness gains in force, it exercises the function of suppressing its direct opposite, the hindrance of restlessness and worry, which causes unhappiness through its agitating nature.

Pīti and *sukha* link together in a very close relationship, so that it may be difficult to distinguish them. Nevertheless the two are not identical states. *Sukha* always accompanies *pīti* but *pīti* does not always accompany *sukha*: "Where there is *pīti* there is *sukha* but where there is *sukha* there is not necessarily *pīti*."[4] (Wr. tr.). In the third *jhāna* there is *sukha* but no *pīti*. *Pīti*, as we noted, belongs to the aggregate of mental formations, *sukha* to the aggregate of feelings. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* explains *pīti* as "delight in the attaining of the desired object" and *sukha* as "the enjoyment of the taste of what is acquired." The text illustrates the difference between them by means of a vivid simile.

> Rapture is like a weary traveller in the desert in summer, who hears of, or sees water or a shady wood. Ease is like his enjoying the water or entering the forest shade. For a man who, travelling along the path through a great desert and overcome by the heat, is thirsty and desirous of drink, if he saw a man on the way, would ask, 'Where is water?' The other would say, 'Beyond the wood is a dense forest with a natural lake. Go there, and you will get some.' He hearing these words would be glad and delighted, and as he went would see lotus leaves, etc., fallen on the ground and become more glad and delighted.

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[1] "Pāmojjūpanisā pīti; pītūpanisā passaddhi; passaddhūpanisaṃ sukhaṃ; sukhūpaniso samādhi." SN. 2:30.

[2] "Appanāya pubbabhāgasukhaṃ." Buddhaghosa, [*Saṃyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*] *Sāratthappakāsinī Nāma Saṃyuttaṭṭhakathā*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script], 3 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1957), 2:50 (hereafter cited as SN.A.).

[3] "Upacārajjhānasahitasukhaṃ." Dhammapāla, [*Saṃyutta Nikāya Tīka*] *Saṃyuttaṭikā* (Pāli Text in Burmese script] 2 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasānana Samiti, 1961), 2:65 (hereafter cited as SN.T.).

[4] "Yattha pīti tattha sukhaṃ yattha sukhaṃ tattha na niyamato pīti." Vism., p. 117. Dhs.A., p. 160.

> Going onwards, he would see man with wet clothes and hair, hear the sounds of wild fowl and pea-fowl, etc., see the dense forest of green like a net of jewels growing by the edge of the natural lake, he would see the water lily, the lotus, the white lily, etc., growing in the lake, he would see the clear transparent water, he would be all the more glad and delighted, [118] would descend into the natural lake, bathe and drink at pleasure and, his oppression being allayed, he would eat the fibres and stalks of the lilies, adorn himself with the blue lotus, carry on his shoulders the roots of the mandalaka, ascend from the lake, put on his clothes, dry the bathing cloth in the sun, and in the cool shade where the breeze blew ever so gently lay himself down and say: 'O bliss! O bliss!' Thus should this illustration be applied: The time of gladness and delight from when he heard of the natural lake and the dense forest till he saw the water is like rapture having the manner of gladness and delight at the object in view. The time when, after his bath and drink he laid himself down in the cool shade, saying, 'O bliss! O bliss!', etc., is the sense of ease grown strong, established in that mode of enjoying the taste of the object.[1]

Pīti and *sukha* co-exist in the first *jhāna*. Therefore the commentarial simile should not be taken to imply that the two are mutually exclusive. Its purport is to suggest that *pīti* gains prominence before *sukha*, for which it helps provide a causal foundation.

In the description of the first *jhāna*, *pīti* and *sukha* are said to be "born of seclusion." The Vibhaṅga elaborates: "They are born, well born, come into existence, come well into existence, appear in this seclusion. Therefore 'born of seclusion' is said."[2] (Wr. tr.). The rapture and happiness born of seclusion, the Buddha states, suffuse the whole body of the meditator in such a way that there is no part of his body which remains unaffected by them. This he explains with the help of the following illustration:

> Monks, take the case of a monk, who, aloof from sensuous appetites, enters and abides in the first *jhāna*; he steeps and drenches and fills and suffuses this body with zest [rapture] and ease [happiness] born of solitude, so that there is not one particle of the body that is not pervaded by this lone-born zest [rapture] and ease [happiness]. Monks, just as a handy bathman or attendant might strew bath powder in some copper basin and gradually sprinkling water, knead it together so that the bath-ball gathered up the moisture, became enveloped in moisture and saturated both in and out, but did not ooze moisture, even so a monk steeps, drenches fills and suffuses this body with zest and ease born of solitude, so that there is not one particle of the body that is not pervaded by this lone-born zest [rapture] and ease [happiness].[3]

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[1] *Expositor*, 1:155-56. Dhs.A., pp. 160-61.

[2] "Te imasmiṃ viveke jātā honti, sañjātā nibbattā, abhinibbattā, pātubhūtā. Tena vuccati vivekajanti." Vibh., p. 267.

[3] GS. 3:17-18. "So imaṃ eva kāyaṃ vivekajena pītisukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripureti parippharati, nāssa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa vivekajena pītisukhena apphuṭaṃ hoti. Seyyathāpi bhikkhave dakkho nahāpako vā nahāpakantevāsī vā kaṃsathāle nahāniya cuṇṇāni okiritvā udakena paripphosakaṃ paripphosakaṃ sanneyya, sā'ssa nahāniya piṇḍi snehānugatā snehaparetā sāntarabāhirā phutā snehena na

This statement raises the question how mental qualities like rapture and happiness can suffuse a physical substance like the body. The subcommentary provides an answer. It says that “the material form produced by consciousness suffuses every area where there is material form produced by *kamma*.”[1] (Wr. tr.). The “material form produced by *kamma*” is the yogi’s physical body. The physical body contains material phenomena of four modes of origination; that is, material phenomena produced by *kamma* (*kammajaṃ rūpaṃ*), by consciousness (*cittajaṃ rūpaṃ*), by temperature (*utujaṃ rūpaṃ*), and by food (*āhārajaṃ rūpaṃ*).[2] When the yogin attains to *jhāna*, the *jhāna* consciousness produces a subtle kind of material form which suffuses his physical body. Since this material form is produced by a consciousness associated with rapture and happiness, the impression is created that rapture and happiness themselves suffuse the whole physical body.

Ekaggatā

Unlike the previous four *jhāna* factors, *ekaggatā* or one-pointedness is not specifically mentioned in the standard formula describing the first *jhāna*. This omission has led some scholars to question the legitimacy of including one-pointedness among the *jhāna* factors. However, a more thorough examination of the canon and commentaries reveals this suspicion to be groundless.

Though one-pointedness is not found in the standard suttanta description of the first *jhāna* it is set forth as a factor of the *jhāna* in the Mahāvedalla Sutta where the Venerable Sāriputta states: “The first meditation is five-factored: if a monk has entered on the first meditation there is initial thought and discursive thought and rapture and joy and one-pointedness of mind. Thus, your reverence, is the first meditation five-factored.”[3] Further, in the Anupada Sutta one-pointedness is also said to be present in the first *jhāna*, coming fifth in a list of constituent factors immediately preceded by the four familiar *jhāna* factors.[4]

In the Abhidhamma the status of one-pointedness as a *jhāna* factor is well-established. The Vibhaṅga, in its chapter on the *jhānas*, states immediately after the standard *jhāna*

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ca paggharati, evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave bhikkhu imaṃ eva kāyaṃ vivekajena pīti sukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripūreti parippharati, nāssa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa vivekajena pītisukhena apphuṭaṃ hoti.” AN. 3:25. DN. 1:74.

[1] “Yathāyathā kammajarūpaṃ tathā tathā cittajarūpassa abhibyāpanato, tenāha ’upādinnakasantatī’ti ādi.” Dhammapāla, [*Dīgha Nikāya Ṭīkā*]. [Vol. 1:] *Sīlakkhandhavaggaṭīkā* [vol. 2:1 *Mahāvaggaṭīkā*; [vol. 3:] *Pāthikavaggaṭīkā*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 3 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1960-61), 1:263 (hereafter cited as DN.T.).

[2] Vism., pp. 526-29. Nārada, *Manual*, p. 302.

[3] MLS. 1:354. “Paṭhamaṃ kho āvuso jhānaṃ pañcangikaṃ: Idh’āvuso paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ samāpannassa bhikkhuno vitakko ca vattati vicāro ca pīti ca sukhaṅ ca cittekaggatā ca. Paṭhamaṃ kho āvuso jhānaṃ evaṃ pañcangikaṃ ti.” MN. 1:294.

[4] See below, p. 153.

formula: "[First] *jhāna*: *vitakka vicāra pīti sukha cittass'ekaggatā*."[1] The medieval compendium *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* defines the wholesome consciousness of the first *jhāna* in exactly the same way.[2] Buddhaghosa too gives commentarial support to this position:

> Although the unification of mind is not actually listed among these factors in the (summary) version [beginning] "which is accompanied by application and sustained thought" [Vbh. 245], nevertheless it is mentioned [later] in the Vibhaṅga as follows: "'jhāna': it is applied thought, sustained thought, happiness, bliss, unification" [Vbh. 257], and so it is a factor too: for the intention with which the Blessed One gave the summary is the same as that with which he gave the exposition that follows it.[3]

Thus the suttas, the Abhidhamma, and the commentaries – our three authorities – all support the inclusion of *ekaggatā* as a *jhāna* factor. It may be that the prominence of *ekaggatā* in the attainment of *jhāna* was so evident that it was felt unnecessary to mention it separately.

A formal definition of *ekaggatā* in terms of its synonyms is given in the Dhammasaṅgaṇi:

> What on that occasion is self-collectedness [one-pointedness] (*cittass 'ekaggatā*)? The stability, solidity, absorbed steadfastness of thought which on that occasion is the absence of distraction, balance, imperturbed mental procedure, quiet, the faculty and the power of concentration, right concentration – this is the self-collectedness [one-pointedness] that there then is.[4]

In this definition "stability" (*ṭhiti*) indicates the mind's ability to stand unshaken on its object, an ability present to some degree in every state of consciousness as a requisite for focussing upon a single object. Shwe Zan Aung points out that *ekaggatā* is in reality

> that state of mind which is conscious of one and only one object, because it is not distracted by a plurality of possible objects... It is the fact in (a given state of) consciousness, of having a single point (eka-agga) as object. In other words, it is the germ of all attentive, selective, focussed, or concentrated consciousness.[5]

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[1] Vibh., p. 274.

[2] Nārada, *Manual*, p. 42.

[3] PP., p. 153. "Tattha cittekaggatā kiñcāpi, savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ ti imasmiṃ pāṭhe na niddiṭṭhā, tathāpi Vibbaṅge 'Jhānanti vitakko vicāro pīti sukhaṃ cittekaggatā'ti [Vbh. 257] evam vuttattā aṅgaṃ eva. Yena hi adhippāyena Bhagavatā uddeso kato, so yeva tena Vibhaṅge pakāsito ti." Vism., p. 119.

[4] *Psy. Ethics*, pp. 13-14. "Katama tasmiṃ samaye cittassekaggatā hoti? Yā tasmiṃ samaye cittassa ṭhiti, saṇṭhiti avaṭhiti avisāhāro, avikkhepo avisāhatamānasā samatho samādhindriyaṃ samādhibalaṃ sammā samādhi, ayaṃ tasmiṃ samaye cittassekaggatā hoti." Dhs., p. 19.

[5] *Compendium*, p. 241.

As giving this ability *ekaggatā* is listed among the universal concomitants of consciousness (*sabbacittasādhāraṇa*).[1]

As a universal mental concomitant, *ekaggatā* is present in unwholesome consciousness as well as wholesome, but its function there is not strong. It is constantly being undermined by the defilements and hindrances, most notably by restlessness (*uddhacca*), a mental factor common to all unwholesome states of mind. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* illustrates the difference between unwholesome and wholesome one-pointedness with the following simile:

> As by sprinkling a dusty place with water and smoothing it, the dust subsides only for a short time and again resumes its original condition whenever it is dry, so in the immoral portion, one-pointedness of mind is not strong. And as when we sprinkle a place with water poured from pots and dig it up with spades and cement it by beating, pounding and kneading, an image is reflected there as in a burnished glass, and the reflection is true any moment though a hundred years were to pass, so in moral [consciousness], one-pointedness of mind is strong.[2]

As a *jhāna* factor one-pointedness is always directed to a wholesome object. It serves to ward off unwholesome influences. In particular it is opposed to the hindrance of sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), which it counters and eliminates. As the hindrances are absent in *jhāna* one-pointedness acquires special strength, based on the previous sustained effort of concentrating the mind. Its stabilizing function is reinforced by the cooperation of the other *jhāna* factors. In the *jhāna* consciousness initial thought thrusts the mind upon the object, sustained thought keeps it anchored there, rapture and happiness encourage its interest and satisfaction in the object. The effect is that in *jhāna* one-pointedness picks up a stabilizing power which cannot be easily overcome by distracting influences. *Jhānic* one-pointedness is therefore also called the "power of concentration" (*samādhibala*). It brings the mind to a state of serenity (*samatha*) which helps mature the other spiritual faculties and acts as a foundation for liberating insight (*vipassanā*).

One-pointedness is used in the Pāli texts as a synonym for *samādhi* (concentration). In fact, as we pointed out above, *samādhi* is defined explicitly in the *Visuddhimagga* as wholesome one-pointedness of mind.[3] Buddhaghosa presents the etymology of *samādhi* in a way which suggests its identity with one-pointedness:

> It is the centering (*ādhāna*) of consciousness and consciousness concomitants evenly (*samaṃ*) and rightly (*sammā*) on a single object; placing is what is meant. So it is the state, in virtue of which consciousness and its concomitants

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[1] Narada, *Manual*, p. 77.

[2] *Expositor*, 1:190. "Yathā hi rajuṭṭhānaṭṭhāne udakena sincitvā sammatthe thokameva kālaṃ rajo sannisīdati. Sukkhante sukkhante puna pakatibhāvena vuṭṭhāti. Evaṃ eva akusalapakkhe cittekaggatā na balavatī hoti. Yathā pana tasmiṃ ṭhāne ghaṭehi udakaṃ āsiñcitvā kudālena khaṇitvā ākoṭanamaddanaghaṭhanāni katvā upalitta ādāse viya chāyā paññāyati. Vassasatātikkamepi tammuhuttakaṃ viya hoti. Evaṃ eva kusalapakkhe cittekaggatā balavatī hoti." Dhs.A., p. 188.

[3] PP., p. 84. "Kusalacittass'ekaggatā." Vism., p. 68.

> remain evenly and rightly on a single object undistracted and unscattered, that should be understood as concentrating.[1]

Concentration is explained as having the characteristic of non-distraction, the function of eliminating distractions, as its manifestation non-wavering. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭakathā* gives a somewhat different characterization of concentration. It says that concentration has the characteristic of leadership, the function of welding together the co-existent states as water kneads bath-powder into a paste, peace of mind or knowledge as its manifestation, and happiness as its proximate cause.[2]

The statement that happiness (*sukha*) is the proximate cause of concentration (*samādhi*) alludes to the causal sequence of spiritual development already discussed. In the Sāmaññaphala Sutta the Buddha says that when the yogi sees that the five hindrances are abandoned in him gladness (*pāmojja*) springs up. Out of gladness rapture (*pīti*) arises. The body of one filled with rapture becomes tranquil; one whose body is tranquil experiences happiness; the mind of one who is happy becomes concentrated.[3] Elsewhere the Buddha states that gladness and the remaining factors of the sequence arise in one whose senses are controlled and whose mind is not corrupted by cognizable sense objects.[4] Again he says that gladness, rapture, tranquility, happiness, and concentration spring up from freedom from remorse (*avippaṭisāra*) which is itself generated by observing pure principles of conduct (*kusalāni sīlāni*).[5]

From these passages we see that concentration, the one-pointedness of *jhānic* intensity, arises out of distinct conditions. Rapture produces calm or tranquility of body and mind, tranquility produces bodily and mental happiness, happiness in turn conduces to gaining complete one-pointedness, the fifth *jhāna* factor. When excitement is present in the form of the hindrances, one-pointedness is feeble and cannot reach the level of *samādhi*. But when the excitement of the hindrances subsides, joy and happiness arise leading to a deepening of concentration. This concentration exercises the task of overcoming sensual desire, the most subtle type of excitement.

The Buddha declares concentration to be the leader of all (wholesome) dhammas.[6] How this is so the Venerable Nāgasena illustrates with two picturesque similes:

> As all the rafters of the roof of a house, O king, go up to the apex, slope towards it, are joined on together at it, and the apex is acknowledged to be the top of all; so is the habit of meditation [*samādhi*] in its relation to other good qualities.

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[1] PP., p. 85. "Ekārammaṇe citta cetasikānaṃ samaṃ sammā ca ādhānaṃ; ṭhapanaṃti vuttaṃ hoti, tasmā yassa dhammassānubhāvena ekārammaṇe cittacetasikā samaṃ sammā ca avikkhepamānā avippakiṇṇā ca hutvā tiṭṭhanti, idaṃ samādhānanti veditabbaṃ." Vism., p. 68.

[2] *Expositor*, 1:157. Dhs.A., pp. 161-62.

[3] DN. 1:73.

[4] SN. 4:78.

[5] AN. 4:107.

[6] AN. 4:107.

> It is like a king, your Majesty, when he goes down to battle with his army in his fourfold array. The whole army – elephants, cavalry, war chariots and bowmen – would have him as their chief, their lines would incline towards him, lead up to him, they would be so many mountain slopes, one above another, with him as their summit, round him they would all be ranged.[1]

An Overview of the First Jhāna

Five mental states have been selected and designated by the Buddha as the factors of the first *jhāna*, but these five are not the only mental phenomena present in the *jhāna*. The first *jhāna* contains a great number of mental phenomena functioning together in unison as coordinate members of the first *jhāna* state of consciousness. Already in the Anupada Sutta the Buddha praises the analytical perspicacity of the Venerable Sāriputta in contemplating the multitude of factors belonging to the makeup of the *jhāna*:

> And those things which belong to the first meditation [*jhāna*]: initial thought and sustained thought and rapture and joy and one-pointedness of mind, impingement, feeling, perception, will, thought, desire, determination, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, attention, are uninterruptedly set up by him; known to him these things arise, known they persist, known they disappear.[2]

In the Abhidhamma literature this list is extended still further with great analytical detail. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi, the primary text of the canonical Abhidhamma, states that on the occasion of the first *jhāna* consciousness about sixty mental states are present. These represent a smaller number of factors spread out with repetitions over twelve general categories.[2] The synoptical *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*, reducing this list to its essentials in terms of distinct mental factors, proposes a set of thirty-three concomitants always contained in the first *jhāna* consciousness. Thirteen are variable factors: seven – contact, feeling, perception, volition, one-pointedness, the life-faculty, and attention – common to all states of consciousness, and six – applied thought, sustained thought, decision, energy, rapture, and desire – general non-universal variables. There are present as well the nineteen beautiful factors (*sobhana*) which accompany all wholesome mental states: faith, mindfulness, shame, moral dread, non-attachment, non-hatred, equanimity, tranquility of the (mental) body and the mind, lightness of the (mental) body and the mind, pliancy of the (mental) body and the mind, adaptability of the (mental) body and the mind, proficiency of the (mental) body and the mind, and rectitude of the (mental) body and the mind.[1] In addition the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*) is always present in *jhāna*. The two illimitables, compassion (*karuṇā*) and sympathetic joy (*muditā*), may also be present individually, thus bringing the total of states possible in the first *jhāna* up to thirty-five.[2] The divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*) of loving kindness (*mettā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) are covered by the factors of non-hatred and equanimity, of which they represent certain intensifications.

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[1] T. W. Rhys Davids, trans. and ed., *The Questions of King Milinda*. (The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 25; Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1890), pp. 60-61 (hereafter cited as QKM.). "Yathā Mahārāja kūṭāgārassa yā kāci gopānasīso sabbe te kūṭaṃgamā honti kūṭa ninnā, kūṭasamosaraṇā, kūtaṃ tāsaṃ aggaṃ-akkhāyati, evaṃ eva kho mahārāja yekeci kusaladhammā sabbe te samādhi pamukhā honti samādhi ninnā, samādhi ponā samādhi pabbhārāti.

Yathā mahārāja, koci rājā caturaṅginī senāya saddhiṃ saṅgāmaṃ otareyya, sabbā va senā, hatthī ca assā ca rathā ca pattī ca tappamukhā bhaveyyuṃ tanninnā, tapponā tappabbhārā, taṃ yeva anupariyāyeyyuṃ, evaṃ eva kho mahārāja, ye keci kusaladhammā sabbe te samādhi pamukhā samādhi ninnā samādhi ponā samādhi pabbhārā." Milp., pp. 38-39.

[2] MLS. 3:78. "Ye ca paṭhamajjhāne dhammā vitakko ca vicāro ca pīti ca sukhaṃ ca cittekaggatā ca phasso vedanā saññā cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkho viriyaṃ sati upekkhā manasikāro, tyāssa dhammā anupadavavatthitā honti, tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbhatthaṃ gacchanti." MN. 3:25.

Of all these states only five – *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, and *ekaggatā* – are called the factors of the first *jhāna*. The reason is that "when these are arisen *jhāna* is said to be arisen."[3] The *jhāna* is not something apart from these factors which possesses them but the constellation of these factors themselves:

> But just as 'The army with the four factors' and 'music with the five factors' and 'The path with the eight factors (eightfold path)' are stated simply in terms of their factors, so this too should be understood as stated simply in terms of its factors when it is said to have 'five factors' or 'possess five factors'.[4]

None of the factors, taken in separation from the rest, can constitute the first *jhāna*. For the *jhāna* to arise they all must be present together, exercising their special *jhānic* functions of inhibiting the hindrances opposed to themselves and of bringing the mind into absorption on the object. The five mental phenomena are only *jhāna* factors by virtue of these special functions. Ordinary *vitakka*, for example, is not a *jhāna* factor if it does not counter sloth and torpor. Sloth and torpor and *vitakka* can co-exist in many ordinary states of consciousness, but when *vitakka* is being developed towards attaining *jhāna* it expels and excludes the hindrance of sloth and torpor. Therefore the *vitakka* in *jhāna* is of a high quality and specialized function supporting concentration. Similarly for doubt and *vicāra*. *Vicāra* can be present in the mind while one is in a state of doubt, but as long as doubt is present *vicāra* cannot become a *jhāna* factor. When *vicāra* is directed to *jhāna* then it shuts out doubt. The same applies to the other three factors. No matter how strong rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness might become in a mind obsessed by the hindrances, they do not consititute the first *jhāna* until the hindrances are eliminated.

Each *jhāna* factor serves as support for the one which succeeds it. *Vitakka* must apply the mind to the object in order for *vicāra* to sustain and anchor it there. *Vicāra* supports the arising of rapture since it is only when the mind is anchored on the object that it can develop the interest needed for rapture to occur. As rapture grows and matures it brings to maturity happiness. This spiritual happiness, by providing an alternative to the fickle pleasures of the senses, encourages the growth of one-pointedness. Desire for sensual pleasure unsettles the mind, preventing the arising of concentration. As the mind begins to find rapture and happiness in a wholesome meditation object, sensual desire is reduced permitting concentration to become stronger. Even if there is no sensual desire in the mind, one-pointedness would not become strong if there were no happiness. In this way, as Nāgasena has explained, all the other wholesome states incline, slope, and lead towards concentration, which stands at their head like the apex on the roof of a house.

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[1] Narada. *Manual* pp. 77-78. "Phasso, vedanā, saññā, cetanā, ekaggatā, jīvitindriyaṃ, manasikāro, vitakko, vicāro, adhimokkho, viriyaṃ, pīti, chando; saddhā, sati, hiri, ottappaṃ, alobho, adoso, tatramajjhattatā, kāyapassaddhi, cittapassaddhi, kāyalahutā, cittalahutā, kāyamudutā. cittamudutā, kāyakammaññatā, cittakammaññatā, kāyapāguññatā, cittapāguññatā, kāyujjukatā, cittujjukatā." *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 131-32.

[3] PP., p. 152. Vism., p. 118.

[4] PP., p. 152-53. Vism., p. 118.

In order for a state of mind to qualify as a first *jhāna* state of consciousness the five *jhānic* factors must not only be able to inhibit and occlude the five hindrances, but must also be able to thrust the mind into the object with absorption intensity. If the factors are present only in part, if they are all present but lack sufficient strength to exclude the hindrances, if they can exclude the hindrances but cannot put the mind into absorption, the state of consciousness is not the first *jhāna*. But when they arise together performing their individual functions in the production of absorption, the first *jhāna* has arisen complete in its possession of five factors. The *Visuddhimagga* explains this cooperative endeavor culminating in *jhāna* thus:

> But applied thought directs the mind onto the object; sustained thought keeps it anchored there. Happiness produced by the success of the effort refreshes the mind whose effort has succeeded through not being distracted by those hindrances; and bliss intensifies it for the same reason. Then unification aided by this directing onto, this anchoring, this refreshing and this intensifying, evenly and rightly centers the mind with its remaining associated states on the object, consisting in unity. Consequently possession of five factors should be understood as the arising of these five, namely applied thought, sustained thought, happiness, bliss, and unification of mind. For it is when these are arisen that *jhāna* is said to be arisen, which is why they are called the five factors of possession.[1]

The Jhāna Thought-Process

The commentaries and later analytical treatises of the Theravāda tradition connect the process of *jhāna* attainment with the account of the cognitive process (*cittavīthi*) presented in the Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma analyzes experience into a succession of discrete, causally connected occasions of consciousness called *cittas* or *citt'uppādas*. Each *citta* endures for only a small fraction of a second yet can still be divided into three stages: a stage of arising (*uppāda*) when it originates, a stage of duration (*ṭhiti*) during which it undergoes transformation, and a stage of dissolution (*bhaṅga*) when it breaks up and ceases, yielding to its immediate successor. *Cittas* succeed one another with such inconceivable rapidity that it is impossible for an average person to note the distinct mental moments. Experience as we know it is a coarse fusion of a multiplicity of *cittas* indiscernible in their uniqueness and discreteness.

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[1] PP., p. 152. “Yasmā pana vitakko ārammaṇe cittaṃ abhiniropeti, vicāro anuppabandhati, tehi avikkhepāya sampāditapayogassa cetaso payogasampattisambhavā pīti pīṇanaṃ, sukhaṃ ca upabrūhanaṃ karoti, atha naṃ sāsesasampayuttadhammaṃ etehi abhiniropanānuppabandhanapīṇanānūpabrūhanehi anuggahitā ekaggatā ekattārammaṇe samaṃ sammā ca ādhiyati, tasmā vitakko, vicāro, pīti, sukhaṃ, cittekaggatā ti imesaṃ pañcannaṃ uppattivasena pañcaṅgasamannāgatatā veditabbā. Uppannesu hi etesu pañcasu jhānaṃ uppannaṃ nāma hoti. Ten’assa etāni pañca samannāgataṅgāni ti vuccanti.” Vism., p. 118.

According to the Abhidhamma philosophy, *cittas* do not occur in isolation but as parts of a series. These series are of two types. One is the passive stream of consciousness which functions as the underlying "limb of becoming," the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*). The second type is the process of active consciousness, by which clear perceptions are made, thoughts and volitions generated, and actions performed. This active process is called the *cittavīthi*.

The *bhavaṅga* or stream of consciousness is made up of a succession of *cittas* proceeding through beginningless time. With each new life the *bhavaṅga* springs up in the mother's womb at the moment of conception (in the case of human or animal life). It is rooted in ignorance (*avijjā*), supported by the desire to exist (*bhavataṇhā*), and given its specific form and character by the generative *kamma* of the past. Through the course of a lifetime it continues to function whenever the mind is free from active thought processes. It is most conspicuous in deep sleep, but it also occurs very briefly innumerable times during waking life between occasions of active perception and cognition.

When a sensory datum or idea impinges on the mind, the passive flow of the life continuum is interrupted. The mind then enters a phase of active consciousness, after which it returns to its passive state. The process of *jhāna* attainment occurs as such an active process of cognition. When the mind has been freed from the hindrances and fully prepared for the attainment of absorption-concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), the mind which has subsided into the life-continuum is stimulated to break out from it by the force of previous intention. This break consists of three moments. The first is simply the past moment of the life-continuum (*atītabhavanga*); the second is the vibration of the continuum (*bhavaṅga calana*), caused by the decisive intention; the third is the cutting off or arrest of the passive stream of consciousness (*bhavaṅga upaccheda*), as active consciousness is about to supervene. Immediately after this arrest moment the mind, well-impressed with the counterpart sign of the meditation subject, rises up in active form, adverting to the object and cognizing it through the "mind-door" (*manodvāra*), i.e., as an object of internal perception.

As the hindrances have been suppressed there arise next four or five moments of *javana*, i.e., apperceptive consciousness, that are associated with unusually intense *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, and *ekaggatā*. The first *javana* in this series is called "the preliminary work" (*parikamma*), since it prepares the mind for the first *jhāna*. In the case of a quick-witted meditator, the *parikamma* moment is skipped over and the series begins with the next moment. The second is called "access" (*upacāra*) as it brings the mind to the neighborhood of *jhāna*. The third, called "conformity" (*anuloma*), qualifies the mind further for the *jhāna*. The fourth is called "change-of-lineage" (*gotrabhū*),[1] since with this act the stream of consciousness begins to cross over from the sense-sphere plane of consciousness (*kāmāvacara*) to the fine material plane (*rūpāvacara*) of *jhānic* consciousness. Immediately after this the *jhāna* consciousness arises. On the occasion of initial attainment it lasts for only one great thought-moment with its three phases of arising, duration, and dissolution. Then the *jhāna* thought passes away and the mind returns to the passive state of the life-continuum, since the first *jhāna* consciousness is close to the passive continuum.

This process can be made more vivid by the following diagram:

A									B							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…
bh	l	ch	m	p	u	a	g	jh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh

Here line *A* represents the four great thought moments preceding the *jhāna* process. This comprises the past stream of consciousness (*bh*), its vibration (*l*), its cutting off (*ch*), and the mind's advertance to the counterpart sign through the mind-door (*m*). Line *B* represents the lapsing of the mind back into the passive stream of consciousness after the *jhāna* attainment is over. *P* represents the moment of preliminary work (*parikamma*), *u* the moment of access (*upacāra*), *a* the moment of conformity (*anuloma*) during which the mind qualifies itself for *jhāna*, and *g* the moment of change-of-lineage where the ordinary stream of consciousness belonging to the sensual sphere is replaced by the lineage of consciousness of the fine material sphere. The following *jh* represents the first *jhāna*. After this the mind relapses into the passive stream of consciousness (*bhavaṅga*) which is represented by *bh* repeated seven times. The groups of three dots in each *citta* represent the birth (*uppāda*), transformation or duration (*ṭhiti*), and dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of each thought moment.[2]

It is evident from this diagram that "absorption is only a single conscious moment" (*ekacittakkhaṇikā yeva*).[3] Unless the meditator masters this attainment by the five ways of mastery to be explained he cannot sustain it. Thus it initially lasts for only one moment before yielding to the life-continuum. But when the yogi has mastered the *jhāna*, a succession of *jhāna cittas* will continue on for as long as he determined before entering the attainment. Therefore if we were to represent this situation diagramatically we would find a repetition of *jh* rather than *bh* after the first *jh* in our diagram.

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[1] The Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta (MN. # 142) uses "*gotrabhū*" to mean a bhikkhu only by name. Also see MN.A. 4:225.

[2] For an account of *jhāna* in relation to the *cittavīthi* see Nārada, *Manual*, pp. 214-19; Vism. pp. 111-12; *Compendium* pp. 54-55.

[3] PP., p. 144. Vism., p. 112.

Perfecting the First Jhāna

The first *jhāna* is the initial stage of absorption. We have mentioned already that the elevated forms of concentration are divided into two basic levels, access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*) and absorption concentration (*appanāsamādhi*). Access concentration is the concentration obtained when the hindrances have been suppressed and the mind has become focussed on the counterpart sign. Absorption concentration is the subsequent concentration which develops when the *jhāna* factors become manifest in full force, fixing the mind upon the sign to the degree of complete absorption. The difference between access and absorption lies in the relative strength of the *jhāna* factors. In access the factors are still weak, so that concentration is intermittent. Just as a young child, lifted to its feet, stands for a while and then falls down, the mind in access remains focussed on the sign for a short while and then falls away. In absorption the *jhāna* factors are strong and fully developed; thus the mind can remain continuously in concentration just as a healthy man can remain standing on his feet for a whole day and night.[1]

Absorption concentration is the concentration of the four *jhānas*, and access the concentration immediately preceding entrance upon the *jhānas*. Once the meditator gains access and the counterpart sign appears to him, he still has to strive to attain absorption. To develop his practice the *Visuddhimagga* recommends several essential measures, based on the testimony of the ancients. He has to live in a suitable dwelling place, rely upon a suitable alms resort, avoid profitless talk, associate only with spiritually-minded companions, make use only of suitable food, live in a congenial climate, and maintain his practice in a suitable posture.[2]

Beyond these measures the earnest yogi should rely on the ten kinds of skill in absorption.[3] The first is "making the basis clean," which means that he should clean his lodging and his physical body so that they conduce to clear meditation. The second is "balancing the spiritual faculties" (*indriyasamattapaṭipādana*). Of the five spiritual faculties, faith and wisdom must be balanced with each other, and energy and concentration must also be kept in balance; the fifth faculty, mindfulness, is always useful and has no opposite counterpart. Third, he must be skillful in producing and developing the sign of concentration. Measures four through seven involve exerting the mind (*paggaha*) on an occasion when it is slack and needs to be exerted, restraining it (*niggaha*) on an occasion when it is agitated and needs to be restrained, encouraging it (*sampahaṅsa*) when it is restless or dejected and needs encouragement, and looking on at the mind with equanimity (*ajjhūpekkhanā*) when all is proceeding well and interference is not needed. As an eighth measure the yogi should avoid distracting persons, as a ninth he should approach people experienced in *samādhi*, and lastly he should be firm in his resolution to achieve concentration.

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[1] PP., p. 131. Vism., p. 102.

[2] PP., pp. 132-34. Vism., pp. 103-104.

[3] PP., pp. 134-40. Vism., pp. 104-110.

After attaining the first *jhāna* a few times the meditator is not advised to set out immediately striving for the second *jhāna*. This would be a foolish and profitless spiritual ambition. Before he is prepared to make the second *jhāna* the object of his endeavor he must first bring the first *jhāna* to perfection. If he is too eager to reach the second *jhāna* before he has perfected the first he is likely to fail to gain the second *jhāna* and find himself unable to regain the first. The Buddha compares such a meditator to a foolish cow who, while still unfamiliar with her own pasture, sets out for new pastures. She gets lost in the mountains without gaining food or drink and cannot find her way back home.[1]

The perfecting of the first *jhāna* involves two steps of procedure: the extension of the sign and the achievement of the five masteries. The 'extension of the sign' (*nimitta-vaḍḍhana*) means extending the size of the object of *jhāna*, that is, the size of the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāganimitta*). The meditator, before entering *jhāna*, should mentally determine the boundaries to which he wishes to extend the sign; then he should enter the *jhāna* and try to bring the sign to reach those boundaries. Beginning with a small area, the size of one or two fingers, he gradually learns to broaden the sign until the mental image can be made to cover the world-sphere or even beyond.[2]

Following this the meditator should try to acquire five kinds of mastery with respect to the first *jhāna*. These five masteries (*pañca vasiyo*) are: mastery in adverting, mastery in attaining, mastery in resolving, mastery in emerging, and mastery in reviewing.[3] Mastery in adverting is the ability to advert to the *jhāna* factors one by one after emerging from the first *jhāna*; the meditator must be able to advert to these factors wherever he wants, whenever he wants, and for as long as he wants. Mastery in attaining is the ability to enter upon *jhāna* quickly. Mastery in resolving is the ability to remain in the *jhāna* for exactly the pre-determined length of time. Mastery in emerging is the ability to emerge from the *jhāna* quickly, without difficulty. Mastery in reviewing is mastery in reviewing the *jhāna* and its factors by means of retrospective knowledge (*paccavekkhanañāṇa*) immediately after adverting to them. When the yogi has achieved this fivefold mastery, then he is ready to strive for the second *jhāna*.

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1. AN. 4:418-19.

2. PP., pp. 158-59. Vism., p. 123.

3. The five are, respectively: *Āvajjanavasi*, *samāpajjanavasi*, *adhitthānavasi*, *vuṭṭhānavasi*, and *paccavekkhanavasi*. For a discussion see Vism., pp. 124-25. PP., pp. 160-61. The canonical source is the Pts., pp. 96-97.

Chapter Five

THE HIGHER JHĀNAS

Having dealt at length with the first *jhāna*, we can now turn to the remaining three members of the tetrad – the second, third, and fourth *jhānas*. As before, taking the stock descriptive formulas of the Pāli Canon as our starting point, we will examine these *jhānas* in terms of their process of attainment, factors, and additional concomitants. Our discussion will emphasize in particular the dynamic nature of the course by which the *jhānas* are achieved. The attainment of the higher *jhānas*, we will see, is a process whereby the grosser factors are successively eliminated and the subtler ones brought to greater prominence. From our examination it will become clear that the *jhānas* link together in a graded sequence of development, the lower serving as basis for the higher, the higher refining and purifying states already present in the lower. Finally we will close by considering the relationship between the fourfold scheme of *jhānas* used in the suttas and the fivefold scheme introduced in the Abhidhamma.

The Second Jhāna

The Attainment of the Second Jhāna

The formula for the attainment of the second *jhāna* runs as follows:

With the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought he enters and dwells in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration.[1] (Wr. tr.).

As we saw, the first *jhāna* is to be attained by eliminating the factors to be abandoned and by developing the factors of possession. In the case of this first *jhāna* the factors to be abandoned are the five hindrances – sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. The factors of possession are the five *jhāna* factors – applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness. The attainment of the second *jhāna* repeats this same basic pattern, only raising it to a different and higher level. At this level the factors to be abandoned are the two initial factors of the first *jhāna* itself – applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*), the factors of possession are the three remaining *jhāna* factors – rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). Hence the formula begins "with the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought," and then goes into the *jhāna*'s positive endowments.

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[1] "Vitakka vicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati." DN. 1:74.

Before he can enter upon the practice for reaching the second *jhāna*, the meditator must first become thoroughly familiar with the first *jhāna* and perfect it through the five kinds of mastery – mastery in adverting, in resolving, in entering, in emerging, and in reviewing. Then, after achieving such mastery, he enters the first *jhāna*, emerges from it, and begins contemplating its defective features. These defects, according to the *Visuddhimagga*, are two: first the attainment is threatened by the nearness of the hindrances, and second, its factors are weakened by the grossness of applied and sustained thought.[1] The former we might call the defect of proximate corruption, the latter the inherent defect. Though the first *jhāna* is secluded from the hindrances, it is only a step removed from the non-*jhānic* consciousness and thus provides only a mild protection from the hindrances. If the yogin is not mindful his contacts with sense objects can incite the defilements and thereby bring the hindrances into activity once again. Pleasant objects tend to stimulate the hindrance of desire, unpleasant ones to stimulate ill will, all five hindrances tend to break out from the deep flow of the subconscious held in check only by the rudimentary force of concentration found in the first *jhāna*. To ensure himself of further protection from the hindrances the meditator realizes that a deeper level of absorption would be helpful. Thus he aspires to reach the second *jhāna* which is at a further remove from the hindrances.

The inherent defect of the first *jhāna* is its inclusion of *vitakka* and *vicāra*. When striving for the first *jhāna* these appeared to the yogin to be helpers in the struggle against the hindrances, *vitakka* directing the mind onto the object, *vicāra* anchoring it there preventing it from drifting away. But after mastering the first *jhāna* the meditator comes to see that *vitakka* and *vicāra* are relatively gross. They are gross in themselves, and also by reason of their grossness, they weaken the other factors. The rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness associated with applied and sustained thought, he sees, are not as powerful and peaceful as they would be if they were freed from applied and sustained thought. Hence he regards *vitakka* and *vicāra* as impediments needing to be eliminated. As the Buddha explains in the Poṭṭhapada Sutta[2], what the meditator previously perceived as subtle and actual subsequently appears to him to be gross and harmful. Then he eliminates it by attaining a higher *jhāna*.

The meditator thus comprehends that in spite of his mastery of the first *jhāna*, his progress is not fully satisfactory; the first *jhāna* – the cherished object of his early striving – itself turns out to be defective, corrupted by the proximity of the hindrances and by the grossness of its factors. He then calls to mind his theoretical knowledge of the second *jhāna*. He reflects that the second *jhāna* is free from *vitakka* and *vicāra*, that it is therefore more tranquil, subtle, and sublime than the first *jhāna*. While *vitakka* and *vicāra* appear gross, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness appear peaceful. By so reflecting the meditator ends his attachment to the first *jhāna* and engages in renewed striving with the aim of reaching the second *jhāna*.

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[1] PP., p. 161. Vism., p. 125.

[2] DN. 1:178-203.

The meditator applies his mind to his meditation subject – a *kasiṇa* or the breath – repeatedly concentrating on it with the intention of overcoming applied thought and sustained thought. When his practice is sufficiently matured the second *jhāna* arises equipped with its three factors – rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness.

The thought process (*cittavīthi*) by which the second *jhāna* is attained is similar to that for the first *jhāna*. The process can be represented by the following diagram:

A									B							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…
bh	l	ch	m	p	u	a	g	jh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh

The Second Jhāna Thought Process

Here the top line *A* represents the past moments of consciousness preceding the *jhānic* process and *B* the moments that follow the second *jhāna*, when the mind returns to its passive *bhavaṅga* state. Here *bh*=*bhavaṅga*; *l*=vibration (*bhavaṅga calana*); *ch*=break off (*bhavaṅga upaccheda*); *m*=mind-door adverting (*manodvārāvajjana*); *p*=moment of preliminary work (*parikamma*); *u*=moment of access (*upacāra*); *a*=moment of conformity (*anuloma*); *g*=moment of change-of-lineage (*gotrabhū*); and *jh*=second *jhāna*. Again, in the case of a quick-witted meditator, the moment of preliminary work (*parikamma*) is not found for the reason that he can bypass it and go directly to access.[1]

From this diagram it is seen that the cognitive process issuing in the second *jhāna* centers on four preliminary moments plus the moment of the *jhāna*. These four moments gain the general designation "access concentration" (*upacāra samādhi*), though technically speaking only one is singled out as the moment of access. An important difference obtains between these access moments leading into the second *jhāna* and the moment of *jhāna* itself. Whereas the second *jhāna* moment is free from *vitakka* and *vicāra*, the latter are still present in all four preliminary moments. Only in the moment of absorption concentration of the second *jhāna* are *vitakka* and *vicāra* totally eliminated.

After stating that the yogin enters and abides in the second *jhāna* through the subsiding of applied and sustained thought (*vitakka-vicārānaṃ vūpasamā*), later in the descriptive formula the Buddha says that the second *jhāna* is "without applied thought and sustained thought" (*avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ*). This phrase appears at first sight to be an unnecessary repetition of the first, but the *Visuddhimagga* defends this choice of wording, showing that the second phrase is not redundant but fulfills a different function. The commentator points out that the opening phrase is stated, firstly, in order to show directly that the second *jhāna* is attained through the surmounting of the gross factors of the first *jhāna*; secondly, that the internal confidence and unification of mind, mentioned immediately afterwards, come about with the act of stilling applied and sustained thought, and thirdly, that this *jhāna* is without applied and sustained thought, not through their bare absence as in the higher *jhānas* or in elementary sense consciousness, but through their actual stilling. But the first phrase does not state blankly that the second *jhāna* is devoid of applied and sustained thought. To make this latter meaning explicit a separate phrase is needed; hence the words "without applied thought and sustained thought."[1]

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[1] The diagrams for the third and fourth *jhānas* also are similar to this with the exception that the *jh* signifies the third and fourth *jhāna* as the case may be. See Nārada, *Manual.*, pp. 216-18.

Because the second *jhāna* is free from *vitakka* and *vicāra* it is called the "noble silence." Once when the Venerable Moggallāna was meditating in seclusion he wondered "What is it that we call 'noble silence' (*ariyo tunhībhāvo*)"? Then it occured to him:

> When with the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought a bhikkhu enters and abides in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration, then this is what we call noble silence.[2] (Wr. tr.).

Vitakka and *vicāra* are as we saw, conditions causing vocal activity (*vacīsaṅkhāra*). As the Cūḷavedalla Sutta says: "Having first had applied thought and sustained thought one subsequently breaks out into speech; therefore applied and sustained thought are activity of speech."[3] When *vitakka* and *vicāra*, the springs of verbal activity, come to a stop inner mental verbalization also comes to a stop, replaced by a profound inward silence of the mind. Since this stilling of *vitakka* and *vicāra* occurs at the level of the second *jhāna*, the *jhāna* acquires the name "noble silence."

Internal Confidence (*ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ*)

With the subsiding of applied and sustained thought the mind of the meditator gains internal confidence (*ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ*). The term *sampasādana*, which we translate as "confidence", signifies the factor of faith (*saddhā*). As it is said in the Vibhaṅga: "'Confidence': faith, the placing of faith, trust, conviction."[4] Since faith, according to the Abhidhamma, is present in every wholesome state of consciousness, it must also be present in the first *jhāna*. However, in the first *jhāna* the meditator's faith is not well established due to the presence of *vitakka* and *vicāra*, which produce thought waves obstructing the emergence of full clarity and serenity. Thus because this faith lacks full clarity and serenity it is not called "confidence". The *Visuddhimagga* explains:

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[1] PP., pp. 163-64. Vism., p. 130.

[2] "Idha mayhaṃ āvuso rahogatassa patisallīnassa evaṃ cetaso parivitakko udapādi. Ariyo tuṇhībhāvo ariyo tuṇhībhāvoti vuccati, katamo nu kho ariyo tuṇhībhāvo? Tassa mayhaṃ āvuso etadahosi: 'Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu vitakkavicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pīti sukhaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ayaṃ vuccati ariyo tuṇhībhāvo'ti." SN. 2:273.

[3] MN. 1:301.

[4] Vibh., p. 268.

> The first *jhāna* is not fully confident owing to the disturbance created by applied and sustained thought, like water ruffled by ripples and wavelets. That is why, although faith does exist in it, it is not called 'confidence'.[1]

When *vitakka* and *vicāra* are made to subside the mind of the meditator becomes very clear and peaceful. Then his faith takes on the quality of "full internal confidence." To indicate this maturation of faith through the stilling of *vitakka* and *vicāra*, "internal confidence" is mentioned in the description of the second *jhāna* but not in that of the first.

Faith (*saddhā*) or confidence (*pasāda*) is a necessary factor in the development of the Buddhist spiritual path and a very important aid to the progress of meditation. In the suttas confidence is seen to arise in three crucial stages – first at the time of listening to the Dhamma, second with the attainment of the second *jhāna*, and third with the attainment of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). In each case confidence arises only when the mind is settled and free from wavering.

The first stage of faith is illustrated by the stock canonical passage: "A householder or a householder's son or one born in another family hears that Dhamma. Having heard that Dhamma he gains faith in the Tathāgata."[2] The faith gained by hearing the Dhamma of the Tathāgata functions as the germ for all higher achievements. It leads to the going forth into the monastic life, the training in morality, concentration, and wisdom, and the achievement of the *jhānas* and stages of deliverance. Thus the Buddha says that "faith is the seed" (*saddhā bījaṃ*).[3] The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* calls faith the "forerunner" (*pubbangamā*) and "precursor" (*purecārikā*): "So faith is the forerunner, the precursor to one who is giving gifts, observing the precepts, performing sabbath duties and commencing culture."[4]

The faith that emerges in the second *jhāna* is indicated by the term "internal confidence" (*ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ*). The word *sampasādana* has two connotations: one is faith in the sense of belief, trust, or conviction; the other is tranquility and serenity. We find the first indicated in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, where it is said: "I myself, lord, from this day forth whatever faith I had in those fools the unclothed – I winnow it away in a strong wind, or I let it be carried away by a swiftly flowing river."[5] The second is intended in the following statement of the Dīgha Nikāya: "And seeing the tranquility of the gods of the community of the thirty-three he expressed his pleasure in these verses."[6] Both these meanings are relevant to the second *jhāna*. On the one hand the meditator gains stronger confidence in the Triple Gem as the truth begins to dawn upon him through his practice; on the other, because of this confidence, he gains serenity or tranquility. Hence the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* points out: "Faith is said to be tranquility. Through connection with it, the *jhāna* is also said to be tranquilizing, as a cloth when steeped in indigo is called indigo."[1] The close relation between faith and mental clarity is demonstrated by the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā*'s explanation of the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*):

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[1] PP., p. 163. "Paṭhamajjhānaṃ vitakkavicārakkhobhena, vicitarangasamākulaṃ iva jalaṃ, na suppasannaṃ hoti, tasmā satiyā pi saddhāya sampasādanaṃ ti na vuttaṃ." Vism., pp. 126-27.

[2] MLS. 1:224. MN. 1:179.

[3] SN. 5:77.

[4] *Expositor*, 1:158. "Evaṃ eva dānaṃ dadato sīlaṃ rakkhato uposathakammaṃ karoto bhāvanaṃ ārabhato saddhā pubbaṃgamā purecārikā hoti." Dhs.A., p. 163.

[5] GS. 2:211. "Esāhaṃ bhante ajjatagge yo me bālesu nigaṇṭhesu sampasādo taṃ mahāvāte vā opuṇāmi, nadiyā vā sīghasotāya pavāhemi." AN. 2:199.

[6] *Dial*. 2:211.

> It [faith] has purifying, or aspiring as its characteristic. As the water-purifying gem of the universal monarch thrown into water causes solids, alluvia, waterweeds and mud to subside and makes the water clear, transparent and undisturbed, so faith arising discards the hindrances, causes the corruptions to subside, purifies the mind and makes it undisturbed.[2]

These two characteristics of trust and tranquility come to prominence with the elimination of *vitakka* and *vicāra* in the second *jhāna*.

The third stage of faith is the confidence arisen with the achievement of stream entry. This faith is qualified as "confidence born of understanding" (*aveccappasāda*) or "rational faith" (*ākāravatī saddhā*) because it develops through direct insight into the Four Noble Truths: "He sees the Noble Truths with understanding."[3] (Wr. tr.). The Buddha explains the third degree of faith as follows:

> Monks, in anyone in whom faith in the Tathāgata is established, rooted, supported by these methods, by these sentences, by these words, that faith is called reasoned, based on vision strong; it is indestructible by a recluse or a brahman, or devas or Māras or Brahmā or anyone in the world.[4]

Unification of Mind (*cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ*)

To explicate the meaning of the phrase "unification of mind" (*cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ*), the Vibhaṅga merely offers the standard Abhidhamma definition of one-pointedness as found in the Dhammasaṅgaṇi:

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[1] *Expositor*, 1:255. "Sampasādanaṃ vuccati saddhā. Sampasādanayogato jhānampi sampasādanaṃ. Nīlavaṇṇayogato nīlavatthaṃ viya." Dhs.A., p. 213.

[2] *Expositor*, 1:157. "Sā panesā sampasādanalakkhaṇā ca saddhā, sampakkhandana lakkhaṇā ca. Yathā hi rañño cakkavattissa udakapasādako maṇi udake pakkhitto paṅkasevālapanakakaddamaṃ sannisidāpeti; udakaṃ acchaṃ karoti vippasannaṃ anāvilaṃ evameva saddhā uppajjamānā nīvaraṇe vikkhambheti kilese sannisīdāpeti cittaṃ pasādeti anāvilaṃ karoti." Dhs.A., p. 162.

[3] "Yo ariya saccāni avecca passati." Dines Anderson and Helmer Smith, eds., *Sutta-Nipatta*, New ed. (Pali Text Society [Publication Series] Vol. 72. 1913; reprint, London: Luzac & Co., 1965), v. 229.

[4] MLS. 1:382. "Yassakassaci bhikkhave imehi ākārehi imehi padehi imehi byañjanehi Tathāgate saddhā niviṭṭhā hoti mūlajātā patiṭṭhitā, ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave ākāravati saddhā dassana mūlikā, daḷhā, asaṃhāriyā samaṇena vā, brāhmaṇena vā, devena vā, mārena vā Brahmuṇā vā kenaci vā lokasmiṃ." MN. 1:320.

> The stability, solidity, absorbed steadfastness of thought which on that occasion is the absence of distraction, balance, imperturbed mental procedure, quiet, the faculty and the power of concentration, right concentration.[1]

This makes unification of mind synonymous with one-pointedness and concentration. Though one-pointedness is present already as a factor of the first *jhāna*, it only gains special mention in the formula for the second *jhāna* since it is in this *jhāna* that concentration first acquires eminence. The concentration of the first *jhāna*, being subject to the disturbing influence of applied thought and sustained thought, is still imperfect. In the second *jhāna*, however, where these gross factors have been suppressed and the mind is purified by inner confidence, one-pointedness becomes stronger and more stable. The *Visuddhimagga* explains the eminence of this mental unification in its etymological account of the term:

> Here is the construction or the meaning in that case. Unique (*eka*) it comes up (*udeti*), thus it is single (*ekodi*); the meaning is, it comes up as the superlative, the best, because it is not overtopped by applied and sustained thought, for the best is called 'unique' in the world. Or it is permissible to say that when deprived of applied and sustained thought it is unique, without companion. Or alternatively: it evokes (*udayati*) associated states, thus it is an evoker (*udi*); the meaning is, it arouses. And that is unique (*eka*) in the sense of best, and it is an evoker (*udi*), thus it is a unique evoker (*ekodi*=single). This is a term for concentration.[2]

Concentration (*samādhi*)

This *jhāna*, or the rapture and happiness of this *jhāna*, are said to be "born of concentration" (*samādhijaṃ*). The concentration that gives birth to this *jhāna* can be understood in two ways – either as the earlier stages of concentration leading up to the second *jhāna* or as the concentration immediately associated with the second *jhāna* itself.[3] To reach the second *jhāna* the meditator had to pass through three earlier degrees of concentration – the preliminary concentration of his initial endeavor, access concentration, and the absorption concentration of the first *jhāna*. All three of these stages can be seen as the concentration giving birth to the second *jhāna*. Alternatively, the concentration giving birth to the *jhāna* can be identified with the one-pointedness contained in the second *jhāna* itself. As in the case of the phrase "unification of mind," special emphasis is placed on this concentration to show its secure establishment following upon the cessation of applied and sustained thought. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* hinder advanced concentration because they activate discursive thinking, which disrupts one-pointedness. The *Visuddhimagga* points out, in regard to the concentration of the second *jhāna*, that "it is only this concentration that is quite worthy to be called 'concentration' because of its complete confidence and extreme immobility due to absence of disturbance by applied and sustained thought."[1]

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[1] See Ch. IV, p. 144.

[2] PP., pp. 162-63. "Tatrāyaṃ atthayojanā. Eko udetī ti ekodi; vitakkavicārehi anajjhārūḷhattā aggo seṭṭho hutvā udetī ti attho. Seṭṭho pi hi loke eko ti vuccati. Vitakkavicāravirahito vā eko asahāyo hutvā iti pi vuttaṃ vaṭṭati. Atha vā, sampayuttadhamme udayatī ti udi; uṭṭhapeti ti attho. Seṭṭhaṭṭhena eko ca so udi cā ti ekodi; samādhiss'etaṃ adhivacanaṃ." Vism., p. 126.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 105.

Rapture and Happiness (pītisukhaṃ)

Rapture and happiness in the first *jhāna*, as we saw, are described as born of seclusion (*vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ*). In contrast, the rapture and happiness of the second *jhāna* are said to be born of concentration (*samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ*). The pre-*jhānic* condition for the arising of rapture and happiness in the first *jhāna* is seclusion, which means the suppression of the five hindrances in access concentration. The preliminary condition for the arising of rapture and happiness in the second *jhāna* is the concentration of the first *jhāna*. Thus when rapture and happiness are said to be "born of concentration," this can be taken to indicate that their source is the first *jhāna* concentration. However, the phrase can also be understood to mean that they are born from the concomitant concentration of the second *jhāna*, as the *Visuddhimagga* allows.

Because they are not weakened by the gross factors of applied and sustained thought, the rapture and happiness of the second *jhāna* are more peaceful and profound than those of the first. In the Dīgha-Nikāya the Buddha explains how the rapture and happiness experienced by the meditator in the second *jhāna* pervade his being so thoroughly that there is no single part of his body that is not affected by them:

> And his very body does he so pervade, drench, permeate, and suffuse with rapture and happiness born of concentration, that there is not a spot in his whole frame not suffused therewith. Just, O king, as if there were a deep pool with water welling up into it from a spring beneath, and with no inlet from the east or west, from the north or south, and it does not rain from time to time, still the current of cool waters rising up from that spring would pervade, fill, permeate, and suffuse the pool with cool waters, and there would be no part or portion of the pool unsuffused therewith.[2]

General Remarks on the Second Jhāna

As the first *jhāna* has five factors, the second *jhāna* has three – rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). The two factors present in the first *jhāna* but absent in the second are the two gross elements which have been made to subside –

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[1] PP., p. 164. "Atha kho ayaṃ eva samādhi samādhīti vattabbatam arahati, vitakkavicārakkhobhavirahena ativiya acalattā suppasannattā ca." Vism., p. 127.

[2] *Dial.* 1:85. "So imaṃ eva kāyaṃ samādhijena pītisukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripūreti parippharati nāssa kiñci sabbāvati kāyassa samādhijena pīti-sukhena apphuṭaṃ hoti. Seyyāthapi mahārāja udakarahado ubbhidodako tassa n'eva assa puratthimāya disāya udakassa āyamukhaṃ na pacchimāya disāya udakassa āyamukhaṃ, na uttarāya disāya udakassa āyamukhaṃ na dakkhiṇāya disāya udakassa āyamukhaṃ devo ca kālena kālaṃ sammā dhāraṃ anupaveccheyya. Atha kho tamhā udakarahadā sitā vāri dhāra ubbhijjitvā taṃ-eva udakarahadaṃ sītena vārinā abhisandeyya parisandeyya paripūreyya paripphareyya nāssa kiñci sabbāvato udaka rahadassa sītena vārinā apphuṭaṃ assa. Evaṃ eva kho mahārāja bhikkhu imaṃ eva kāyaṃ samādhijena pītisukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripūreti parippharati nāssa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa samādhijena pītisukhena apphuṭaṃ hoti." DN. 1:74-75.

applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*). Unlike the first *jhāna* formula, which does not mention one-pointedness explicitly, the formula for the second *jhāna* refers to it twice – one time directly under the synonymous term "unification of mind" (*ekodibhāvaṃ*), and once obliquely by calling the rapture and happiness "born of concentration" (*samādhijaṃ*). Even though the three factors of the second *jhāna* are the same in nature as those in the first, they are still different in quality. The factors that remain after the gross elements have been eliminated are of a subtler, more peaceful, and more exquisite qualitative tone.

Whereas all the states mentioned in the first *jhāna* formula are *jhāna* factors, the present formula includes "internal confidence". This indicates that the constituency of the *jhāna* is wider than its basic factors. The Anupada Sutta, already referred to, gives the following expanded list of states pertaining to the second *jhāna*: "inward tranquility and rapture and joy and one-pointedness of mind, impingement, feeling, perception, will, thought, desire, determination, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention."[1] The Dhammasaṅgaṇi gives a list of close to sixty states, including all those present in the first *jhāna* except *vitakka* and *vicāra* and their equivalents.[2] The *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*, too, gives thirty-three possible constituents of the second *jhāna*. This list is identical with that of the first *jhāna* except that *vitakka* and *vicāra* are here omitted.[3]

The Third Jhāna

The Attainment of the Third Jhāna

To attain the third *jhāna* the meditator must apply the same method he used to ascend from the first to the second. He must first master the second *jhāna* in the five ways already described. Then he must enter it, emerge from it and reflect upon its defects. When he does so he sees that this attainment is threatened by the two flaws, the defect of proximate corruption and the inherent defect. The defect of proximate corruption is the nearness of applied and sustained thought. If these should arise they will disrupt the serenity and powerful concentration of the second *jhāna* and bring the mind back down to the first *jhāna* or to lower states of consciousness. The inherent defect is the presence of rapture (*pīti*), a relatively gross factor which weakens the other *jhāna* factors remaining in the mind. As the Buddha says: "Whatever there is in it pertaining to rapture, of mental excitation, that appears to be gross."[4] (Wr. tr.)

Since the meditator finds that the second *jhāna* is insecure and corrupted by rapture, he cultivates an attitude of indifference towards it. With mindfulness and awareness he contemplates the defectiveness of rapture, and intensifies his attention to happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), considering them as more peaceful and sublime. Putting away attachment to the second *jhāna*, he focusses his mind on gaining the third *jhāna*, which appears superior for the reason that it possesses happiness and mental unification free from the disturbing influence of rapture. He again renews concentration on his meditation object with the aim of abandoning rapture and ascending to the higher *jhāna*. When his practice matures, he attains the third *jhāna* with its factors of happiness and one-pointedness. In the attainment the mind passes through the same stages of the thought-process as in the earlier *jhānas*. But here *vitakka*, *vicāra*, and *pīti* are present in the moments of access, only disappearing on the actual occasion of full absorption.

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[1] MLS. 3:78 MN. 3:26.

[2] Dhs., p. 44.

[3] Nārada, *Manual*, pp. 131-32. See above Ch. IV., p. 154.

[4] "Yad eva tattha pītigataṃ cetaso ubbillāvitattaṃ etena etaṃ olārikaṃ akkhāyati." DN. 1:37.

The standard formula for the third *jhāna* appears in the suttas as follows:

> With the fading away of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and discerning and he experiences in his own person that happiness of which the noble ones say: 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful – thus he enters and dwells in the third *jhāna*.[1] (Wr. tr.).

We have seen that of the five *jhāna* factors pertaining to the first *jhāna*, two are eliminated with the attainment of the second *jhāna*. The third *jhāna* carries this progressive refinement of consciousness a step further, eliminating rapture. It retains happiness and one-pointedness, which are now purer and more powerful because free from admixture with the gross rapture.

The formula indicates that the third *jhāna* contains, besides the *jhāna* factors, three additional *cetasika*s or mental concomitants which are not included among the *jhāna* factors. These three are equanimity (*upekkhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), and clear comprehension or discernment (*sampajañña*). Therefore a peculiarity of this formula is that it mentions three mental properties which are not *jhāna* factors and does not mention one-pointedness, which along with happiness is a constituting factor of the third *jhāna*.

We will now take the three additional mental concomitants and the two *jhāna* factors mentioned in the formula and discuss them one by one.

Equanimity **(upekkhā)**

The Pāli word *upekkhā* (Skt. *upekṣā*) is formed from the prefix *upa* and the root *ikh* (Skt. *ikṣ*) meaning "to see". The *Vimativinodanī*, the subcommentary to the Vinaya, giving *upa* the sense of impartiality, justly, or unprejudicedly, explains *upekkhā*: "the state of impartiality due to the habit of associating with wisdom. Thus it sees justly."[2] (Wr. tr.) *Upekkhā* therefore means, etymologically, even-mindedness or just-mindedness. The commentary to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* defines equanimity as "looking on impartially" and explains it as having the characteristic of reflection or of balance, the function of avoiding excess and deficiency or of destroying bias, and the manifestation as neutrality.[1]

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[1] "Pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhaṃ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedi yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti 'upekkhako satimā sukhavihāri ti tatiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati." DN. 2:313; 1:75.

[2] "Paññāya sahacaraṇaparicayena yathā samavāhitabhāvo hoti. Evaṃ yuttito passati." Coliya Kassapa Thera, [*Samantapāsādikā Vinayaṭṭhakathā Ṭīkā*] *Vimativinodaniṭīkā*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 2 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, l960), 1.73 (hereafter cited as Vimv. T.).

The *Visuddhimagga* and the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* explicate the clause "he dwells in equanimity" (*upekkhako viharati*) in identical terms:

> He dwells in equanimity: it watches [things] as they arise (*upapattito ikkhati*), thus it is equanimity (*upekkhā* – or onlooking); it sees fairly, sees without partiality (*a-pakkhapatita*), is the meaning. A possessor of the third *jhāna* is said to dwell in equanimity since he possesses equanimity that is clear, abundant and sound.[2]

These explanations are suitable for understanding the kind of *upekkhā* which is included in the third *jhāna*. However, the moral *upekkhā* or "equanimity" occurring in the Pāli texts has a wide range of meanings. The *Visuddhimagga* isolates ten, partly overlapping, kinds of equanimity found in the canon. These are as follows:

1. six-factored equanimity,
2. equanimity as a divine abiding,
3. equanimity as an enlightenment factor,
4. equanimity of energy,
5. equanimity about formations,
6. equanimity as a feeling,
7. equanimity about insight,
8. equanimity as specific neutrality,
9. equanimity of *jhāna*, and
10. equanimity of purification.[3]

For the sake of clear understanding it will be helpful to consider each briefly in turn.

1. Six-factored equanimity (*chaḷaṅgupekkhā*)

When an arahant comes in contact with objects through his senses he neither clings to them nor rejects them; rather, he regards them with an attitude of emotional equilibrium. This attitude is called six-factored equanimity, an unbiased response towards the six sense objects – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mental objects – experienced through the six sense faculties. As the Buddha says: "Here a bhikkhu whose cankers are destroyed is neither glad nor sad on seeing a visible object with the eye; he dwells in equanimity, mindful, and fully aware."[1]

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[1] "Ajjhupekkhanato upekkhā: sā paṭisaṅkhāna lakkhaṇā, samavāhita lakkhaṇā vā; ūnādhika nivārana rasā, pakkhapātupacchedana rasā vā; majjhattabhāva paccupaṭṭhānā." Buddhaghosa, [*Aṅguttara Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*] *Manorathapuranī Nāma Aṇguttaraṭṭhakathā*,[Pāli Text in Burmese script], 3 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1958-68), 1:390 (hereafter cited as AN.A.).

[2] PP., p. 166. Vism., p. 129.

[3] PP., p. 166. "Upekkhā pana dasavidhā hoti: chaḷaṅgupekkhā, brahmavihārupekkhā, bojjhaṅgupekkhā, viriyupekkhā, saṅkhārupekkhā, vedanupekkhā, vipassanupekkhā, tatramajjhattupekkhā, jhānupekkhā, pārisuddhi upekkhā ti." Vism., p. 129.

2. Equanimity as a divine abiding (*brahmavihāra upekkhā*)

Whereas six-factored equanimity is directed towards sense objects, equanimity as a divine abiding is directed towards living beings. This type of equanimity comes as the fourth of the four sublime "social emotions" which a meditator is advised to cultivate towards all beings. The other three are loving-kindness (*mettā*), the wish for the happiness of all beings; compassion (*karuṇā*), commiseration with the pain and suffering of other; and sympathetic joy (*muditā*), rejoicing at the success and good fortune of others. While loving kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy tend towards the side of approval in relation to beings, and their opposites – aversion, cruelty, and envy – towards the side of resentment, equanimity is marked by the transcending of both approval and resentment.

The Buddha declares that a bhikkhu practising the sublime state of equanimity dwells pervading all directions with a mind of equanimity.[2] The Vibhaṅga explains that "just as he would feel equanimity on seeing a person who was neither beloved nor unloved, so he pervades all beings with equanimity."[3] (Wr. tr.) The commentaries explain the divine abiding of equanimity thus:

> Equanimity is characterized as promoting the aspect of neutrality towards beings. Its function is to see equality in beings. It is manifested as the quieting of resentment and approval. Its proximate cause is seeing ownership of deeds (*kamma*) thus: 'Beings are owners of their deeds.'[4]

3. Equanimity as an enlightenment factor (*bojjhaṅg' upekkhā*)

Equanimity is also included among the seven factors of enlightenment as the enlightenment factor of equanimity (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*). It comes last in the series, being preceded by the enlightenment factors of mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture, tranquility, and concentration. These seven factors are called invincible states (*aparihāniyā dhammā*) because their practice leads without fail to *nibbāna*.[5] The Buddha says:

> Just as, monks, in a peaked house all rafters whatsoever go together to the peak, slope to the peak, join in the peak, and of them all the peak is reckoned

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1. PP., p. 166. "Idha khīṇāsavo bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā neva sumano hoti na dummano, upekkhako ca viharati sato sampajāno." AN. 3:279.

2. DN. 1:251.

3. Vibh., p. 275.

4. PP., p. 244. "Sattesu majjhattākārappavattilakkhaṇā upekkhā, sattesu samabhāvadassanarasā, paṭighānunayavūpasampaccupaṭṭhānā. kammassakā sattā." Vism., p. 264.

5. KS. 5:85-86.

> chief, even so, monks, one who cultivates and makes much of the seven limbs of wisdom, slopes to nibbana, inclines to nibbana, tends to nibbana.[1]

4. Specific neutrality (*tatramajjhattatā upekkhā*)

The fourth kind of equanimity is *tatramajjhattatā*, a Pāli term that has been rendered into English by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli as "specific neutrality." According to the commentaries specific neutrality consists in the "equal efficiency of conascent states" (*sahajātānaṃ samvāhitabhūtā*).[2] It is the mental factor responsible for maintaining balance among the constituent factors in a state of consciousness. The *Visuddhimagga* explains it thus:

> Specific neutrality (*tatramajjhattatā*-lit. 'neutrality in regard thereto') is neutrality (*majjhattatā*) in regard to those states [of consciousness and consciousness-concomitants] arisen in association with it. Its function is to prevent deficiency and excess, or its function is to inhibit partiality. It is manifested as neutrality. It should be regarded as like a conductor (driver) who looks with equanimity on thoroughbreds progressing evenly.[3]

The *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* classifies *upekkhā* of this kind as a morally beautiful mental property (*sobhana cetasika*).[4] It is said to be present in every beautiful state of consciousness, giving balance and harmony to the virtuous mind. As a particular *cetasika*, *tatramajjhattatā* can assume different forms in different contexts. In fact, as we will see below, it appears as six of the ten kinds of equanimity being outlined here. Shwe Zan Aung, who translates the Pāli term as "balance of mind" or "mental equipoise," shows this multivalent character of the state:

> It is intellectual and not hedonic, and appears as a nuance in conscious experience, when the object is of a 'higher' kind than those which evoke the hedonic *upekkhā*. It is, e.g., a *bojjhanga*, or a factor of wisdom, in the consciousness of Ariyans, and a factor of higher knowledge than the average, in the consciousness of average minds (*Three Ṭīkā*'s, p. 195). It is this tatramajjhattatā which we meet with in the phrases "Brahmacariyupekkha" or religious equanimity, and saṅkhārupekkhā, or indifference to the world.[5]

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[1] *Ibid.* 5:63. "Seyyathāpi bhikkhave kūṭāgārassa yā kāci gopānā siyo sabbā tā kūṭaninnā, kūṭaponā, kūtapabbhārā, evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave bhikkhu sattabojjhange bhāvento sattabojjhange bahulīkaronto nibbānaninno hoti nibbānapono nibbānapabbhāro." SN. 5:75.

[2] PP., p. 167, 527. Vism., pp. 130, 395

[3] PP., p. 527. "Tesu dhammesu majjhattatā tatramajjhattatā, sā cittacetasikānaṃ samavāhitalakkhaṇā, ūnādhikatānivāranarasā, pakkhapāta upacchedanarasā vā, majjhattabhāvapaccupaṭṭhānā; cittacetasikānaṃ ajjhupekkhanabhāvena samappavattānaṃ ājāniyānaṃ ajjhupekkhakasārathi viya daṭṭhabba." Vism., p. 895. Dhs.A., p. 177.

[4] Nārada. *Manual*, p. 78

[5] *Compendium*, p. 230.

5. Equanimity of *jhāna* (*jhāna upekkhā*)

Equanimity of *jhāna* is, as the name implies, the equanimity present in the experience of the *jhānas*. It is this type of equanimity, a mode of specific neutrality, which is signified by the phrase describing the third *jhāna* meditator as abiding in equanimity, as we see below (pp. 193-94).

6. Purification equanimity (*parisuddhi upekkhā*)

"Purification equanimity" is the equanimity present in the fourth *jhāna*, which gains this designation because it purifies all opposition. We will discuss this type of equanimity more fully in the section on the fourth *jhāna*.

7. Equanimity of energy (*viriya upekkhā*)

The balanced application of energy by the avoidance of over-exertion and laxity is called "equanimity of energy". Striving too hard with the expectation of quick results tends to agitation and frustation; at such times the meditator must call this equanimity to mind and tone down his exertions. On the other hand, laxity and overconfidence cause a meditator to drift away from the path; at such times he should apply energy to bring himself back to the path. In this way he avoids the two extremes of excessive application and laxity.

8. Equanimity about formations (*sankhāra upekkhā*)

"Equanimity about formations" is a technical term used in the context of meditation, relevant to both serenity-meditation and insight-meditation. It signifies the wisdom which looks with detached indifference towards the various phenomena that come within its view. In the case of serenity-meditation there are eight types of such equanimity. These consist in detached indifference towards the eight sets of factors to be surmounted by each of the eight meditative attainments, i.e., the four *jhānas* and the four immaterial states. In the case of insight-meditation there are ten types of equanimity about formations. These amount to the mental composure towards formations which evolves for the purpose of obtaining the four paths, their fruits, the liberation of emptiness, and the liberation of signlessness.[1] We will discuss this kind of equanimity at greater length in connection with the attainment of supramundane *jhāna*.

9. Equanimity about insight (*vipassanā upekkhā*)

Equanimity about insight is in effect identical with the equanimity about formations that emerges in the development of insight meditation. Buddhaghosa explains the slight nuance of difference between them as following upon the difference between neutrality about investigating formations and neutrality about catching hold of them.

> …When a man has begun insight, and he sees with insight knowledge the three characteristics, then there is neutrality in him about further investigating the impermanence etc. of formations, and that neutrality is called equanimity about insight. But… when a man, through seeking the three characteristics,

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[1] Pts., pp. 60-65.

> sees the three kinds of becoming as if burning, then there is neutrality in him about catching hold of formation: and that neutrality is called equanimity about formations.[1]

10. Equanimity as a feeling (*vedanā upekkhā*)

Equanimity as a feeling is a hedonic kind of *upekkhā* consisting in neutral feeling, i.e., feeling which is neither painful nor pleasant. Experientially feeling is either pleasant (*sukha*), painful (*dukkha*), or neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkhamasukha*). It is this last kind of feeling that is intended by "equanimity as a feeling." The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* says in definition of hedonic neutrality:

> 'Hedonic indifference' means neutral feeling. It may be verbally defined as that which views equally the occurence of the aspects of pain and pleasure, and may be further amplified thus: 'proceeds under a medium condition by occupying a neutral position'.[2]

Although this experience comes in between pain and pleasure it is not a mode of *tatramajjhattatā*, "specific neutrality". The latter belongs to the aggregate of mental formations (*sankhārakkhandha*) and is a more evolved mental stance involving reflective impartiality towards sense objects, beings, or formed phenomena. Equanimous feeling is pure hedonic neutrality, and belongs to the aggregate of feelings (*vedanākkhandha*). Whereas *tatramajjhattatā* is a morally beautiful mental factor (*sobhanacetasika*) which can be present only in wholesome or indeterminate states of consciousness, equanimous feeling is a variable which can be present in any kind of consciousness – wholesome, unwholesome, or indeterminate.

These ten kinds of equanimity explained in the *Visuddhimagga* can be reduced to four basic factors. Equanimity about formations and equanimity about insight belong to wisdom (*paññā*), the wisdom that looks upon phenomena with detached indifference. Equanimity of energy and equanimity of feeling are, respectively, the mental factors of energy (*viriya*) and feeling (*vedanā*). The remaining six are modes of *tatramajjhattatā*, specific neutrality. The *Vimativinodanī* points out how the same factor of neutrality has been given different names under different circumstances:

> There the same centredness (of mind) is called six-factored equanimity of a *khīṇāsava* (one whose cankers are destroyed) as it does not abandon the natural state of purity when desirable or undesirable objects of the six kinds come into focus in the six doors; equanimity as a divine abiding, as it maintains the balanced state of mind towards all beings; equanimity as an enlightenment factor, as it balances the associated mental states; specific equanimity of *jhāna*, as it unbiasedly balances the great happiness in the third

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1. PP., p. 168. "…Yā āraddhavipassakassa vipassanāñāṇena lakkhaṇattaye diṭṭhe sankhārānaṃ aniccabhāvādivicinane majjhattatā uppajjati, ayaṃ vipassanupekkhā nāma… Yā lakkhaṇattayassa diṭṭhattā āditte viya tayo bhave passato sankhāragahaṇe majjhattatā, ayaṃ sankhārupekkhā nāma." Vism., p. 131.

2. *Expositor*, 1:56. "Upekkhāti cettha adukkhamasukhā vedanā vuttā. Sā hi sukhadukkhākārappavattiṃ upekkhāti, majjhattākārasaṇṭhitattā tenākārena pavattatīti upekkhā." Dhs.A., p. 85.

> *jhāna*; and purification equanimity, as it purifies all mental factors in the fourth *jhāna*. Thus it is said to be six-fold owing to circumstantial differences.[1] (Wr. tr.).

The kind of *upekkhā* referred to in the third *jhāna* formula by the phrase “he abides in equanimity” is the equanimity of *jhāna*, a form of *tatramajjhattatā*.[2] Since the latter is present in all wholesome states of consciousness, it follows that *jhānic* equanimity has been present in the meditator’s mind even while he was dwelling in access concentration and in the two lower *jhānas*. It is only mentioned first in the third *jhāna* formula for the reason that it first comes to prominence here, the fading away of rapture allowing it to become evident.

Nevertheless, though *upekkhā* is referred to twice in the formula, it is not cited as a *jhāna* factor for the third *jhāna*. Only two mental states are designated as third *jhāna* factors, namely, happiness and one-pointedness. Thus in the Vibhaṅga’s treatment of the third *jhāna*, though *upekkhā* is included among the prominent constituents of the *jhāna*,[3] the *jhāna* itself is said to be a two-factored state comprising happiness and one-pointedness.[4] The reason is that only those phenomena present in a meditative attainment which oppose the hindrances and aid mental unification are counted as *jhāna* factors. These are the five mentioned in the Mahāvedalla Sutta, plus neither painful-nor-pleasant feeling, a factor of the fourth *jhāna*.

Some confusion might arise over the statement that both happiness and equanimity are present in the third *jhāna*. One might think that two different feelings are present simultaneously. Such confusion is due to misinterpreting this equanimity as equanimous feeling or hedonic neutrality (*vedan’upekkhā*). Since only one feeling can be present in a single state of consciousness happiness, which is pleasant feeling, cannot co-exist with equanimous feeling. But when the *upekkhā* referred to here is understood as the intellectual, morally wholesome quality of *jhānic* equanimity or specific neutrality – which can enter into association with either pleasant or indifferent feeling – then there is no difficulty in admitting the simultaneous presence of equanimity and happiness.

Mindfulness and Discernment

Mindfulness (*sati*) and discernment (*sampajañña*) are two mental states which work hand in hand in the practice of meditation. They are frequently joined together in a compound. Together they facilitate progress in the spheres both of serenity and insight.

Sati, or mindfulness, means the remembrance of an object. It sometimes signifies simply memory, but in the context of meditation it means the constant bearing of the meditation subject in the mind. Mindfulness is a very clear and steady state; thus it is said to have the characteristic of "not floating away" (*apilāpanatā*).[1] The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* compares mindfulness to the king's treasurer who reminds the king of everything he has in his treasury; mindfulness reminds the meditator of both his good and bad qualities, and also reminds him to avoid the bad and cultivate the good.[2] Mindfulness figures as a controlling faculty (*indriya*), a power (*bala*), an enlightenment factor (*bojjhaṅga*), and a factor of the Noble Eightfold Path (*maggaṅga*).

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[1] Vimv.T. 1:73-74.

[2] PP., p. 168. Vism., P. 131.

[3] “*Jhāna* means equanimity, mindfulness, discernment, happiness [and] one-pointedness of mind.” (Wr. tr.). “Jhānanti upekkhā sati sampajaññaṃ sukhaṃ cittassekaggatā.” Vibh., p. 270.

[4] “*Jhāna* is two-factored: happiness [and] one-pointedness of mind.” (Wr. tr.). “Duvaṇgikaṃ jhānaṃ hoti: sukhaṃ, cittass’ekaggatā.” *Ibid*., p. 275.

Sampajañña can be translated as discernment, awareness, or clear comprehension. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* explains it thus:

> 'Comprehension' is that which comprehends. The meaning is to know a thing all round, in different ways. Knowledge of a thing according to its usefulness, its expediency, its scope, and to know it without confusion: these are its four divisions.[3]

Discernment is in nature the same as wisdom (*paññā*), which has illuminating and understanding as characteristics.[4] In insight meditation, discernment is "that which knows impermanence, etc., in right ways."[5] Again the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* states that "comprehension has the characteristic of opposition to delusion, the function of overcoming doubt, or of bringing a work to completion, and the manifestation of examination."[5]

Mindfulness and discernment are most conspicuous in insight meditation, but they contribute as well to the attainment of *jhāna*. They are mentioned for the first time in the formula for the third *jhāna*, though this should not be taken to imply that they appear for the first time only here. So fundamental are these two factors to meditative development that a meditator cannot attain even the access to the first *jhāna* without them, let alone absorption. In fact we see the two already enjoined upon a meditator in his preliminary training before he actually undertakes intensive practice:

> He is mindful and acts with clear comprehension when going and coming; when looking forward and backward; when bending and stretching his body; when wearing his robes and alms-bowl, when eating, drinking, chewing and tasting; when discharging excrement and urine; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep and awakening; when speaking and keeping silent.[6]

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[1] *Expositor*, 1:190. Dhs.A., p. 188.

[2] *Expositor*, 1:159-6l. Dhs.A., pp. 164-65.

[3] *Expositor*, 1:173. "Sampajānāti ti sampajaññaṃ. Samantato pakārehi jānātī'ti attho. Sātthaka sampajaññaṃ sappāya sampajaññaṃ gocara sampajaññaṃ asammoha sampajaññaṃ ti. Imesaṃ cattunnaṃ panassavasena bhedo veditabbo." Dhs.A., p. 175.

[4] *Expositor*, 1:161. "Obhāsana lakkhaṇā paññā, pajānana lakkhaṇā ca." Dhs.A., p. 165.

[5] Expositor, 1:173. Dhs.A., p. 175.

[5] *Expositor*, 1:161. "Asammohalakkhaṇaṃ sampajaññaṃ. Tīraṇarasaṃ; pavicaya paccupaṭṭhānaṃ." Dhs.A., p. 219.

[6] Nyānatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha*, p. 85. MN. 1:274.

Because they are comparatively gross, the first and second *jhānas* do not reveal the functions of mindfulness and discernment with sufficient clarity to merit attention. But when the level of absorption reaches the subtlety of the third *jhāna* the two become distinctly evident.[1] Keen mindfulness and discernment are particularly needed to avoid a return of rapture. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* points out that just as a suckling calf, removed from the cow and left unguarded, again approaches the cow, so the happiness of the third *jhāna* tends to veer towards rapture if unguarded by mindfulness and discernment.[2] Once rapture arises the third *jhāna* is lost. It is mindfulness and discernment which hold the *jhānic* mind on happiness rather than rapture, to which the mind naturally tends to cling in their absence. Therefore, in order to emphasize these functions of mindfulness and discernment, they are mentioned here rather than in the descriptions of the preceding *jhānas*.

Happiness

After the meditator has eliminated applied and sustained thought in attaining the second *jhāna* and rapture in attaining the third, what remains from the original set of five factors is happiness and one-pointedness. The feeling experienced by the meditator in the third *jhāna* is not equanimity but happiness (*sukha*), as made explicit in the phrase: "He experiences happiness with his body" (*sukhaṃ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti*). In the Sāmaññaphala Sutta the Buddha illustrates this with the following simile:

> And his very body does he so pervade, drench, permeate, and suffuse with that ease [happiness] that has no joy [rapture] with it, that there is no spot in his whole frame not suffused therewith.
>
> Just, O king, as when in a lotus tank the several lotus flowers, red or white or blue, born in the water, grown up in the water, not rising up above the surface of the water, drawing up nourishment from the depths of the water, are so pervaded, drenched, permeated, and suffused from their very tips down to their roots with the cool moisture thereof, that there is no spot in the whole plant, whether of the red lotus, or of the white, or of the blue, not suffused therewith. Similarly, O king, the bhikkhu so pervades, drenches, permeates, and suffuses his body with raptureless happiness, that there is no spot in the whole body not suffused therewith.[3]

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[1] Vism., p. 13l.

[2] *Expositor*, 1:233.

[3] *Dial*. 1:85-86. "So imaṃ eva kāyaṃ nippītikena sukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripūreti parippharati, nāssa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa nippītikena sukhena apphuṭaṃ hoti.

Seyyathā pi mahā-rāja uppaliniyaṃ, paduminiyaṃ puṇḍarīkiniyaṃ appekaccāni uppalāni vā padumāni vā puṇḍarikāni vā udake-jātāni udakesaṃvaḍḍhāni udakā'nuggatāni anto-nimugga-positāni, tāni yāva caggā yāva ca mūlā sītena vārinā abhisannāni parisannāni paripūrāni paripphuṭṭhāni, nāssa kiñci sabbāvataṃ uppalānaṃ vā padumānaṃ vā puṇḍarikānaṃ vā sītena varinā apphuṭaṃ assa. Evaṃ eva kho mahārāja bhikkhu imaṃ eva kāyam nippītikena sukhena abhisandeti parisandeti paripūreti parippharati, nāssa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa nippītikena sukhena apphuṭaṃ hoti." DN. 1:75.

The word “body” (*kāya*) could be misinterpreted if we are not careful about its usage in this particular context, leading us to the wrong conclusion that the happiness belonging to the *jhāna* is pleasant bodily feeling. The happiness is still mental pleasure (*cetasika sukha*) or joy (*somanassa*), as in the first two *jhānas*. The word “body” here means the mental body (*nāmakāya*), that is, the group of mental factors associated with consciousness. However, the happiness of the mental body also overflows and produces physical pleasure. For the meditator’s mind, saturated with happiness, originates certain types of subtle material phenomena which cause bodily pleasure even after the meditator has emerged from *jhāna*. In explanation of this the *Visuddhimagga* says:

> Now as to the clause ‘he feels bliss [happiness] with his body’, here although in one actually possessed of the third *jhāna* there is no concern about feeling bliss [happiness], nevertheless he would feel the bliss [happiness] associated with his mental body, and after emerging from the *jhāna* he would also feel bliss (happiness] since his material body would have been affected by the exceedingly superior matter originated by that bliss [happiness] associated with the mental body. It is in order to point to this meaning that the words, ‘he feels bliss [happiness] with his body’ are said.[1]

One-pointedness

The second constituting factor of the third *jhāna* is one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*). Though one-pointedness is not mentioned by name in the third *jhāna* formula, its presence in the attainment can be implicitly understood. We noticed earlier that the formula for the first *jhāna* also does not refer directly to one-pointedness though it is more than obvious that it must be included there. Since one-pointedness is a factor common to all states of consciousness, indispensable to sustained concentration, it must also be present with abundant strength in the third *jhāna*. It is explicitly mentioned in fact as a *jhāna* factor in the Vibhaṅga.[2] Moreover, the mind in the third *jhāna* is full of *sukha*, and the mind suffused with *sukha*, as we saw earlier, gains *samādhi*, identical in meaning with one-pointedness. Therefore one-pointedness must be present here. It is mentioned only in the second *jhāna* formula for the reason that it there acquires novel intensity due to the subsiding of applied and sustained thought.

In terms of the Abhidhamma analysis, the third *jhāna* consciousness includes all the factors originally present in the first *jhāna* consciousness except *vitakka*, *vicāra*, and *pīti*, three general variables. Thus it contains a minimum of thirty concomitants of consciousness, and can further include compassion and sympathetic joy separately at times when these qualities are developed to the *jhānic* level.[3]

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[1] PP., p. 169. “Idāni, ’sukhañ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti’ti ettha kiñcapi tatiyajjhānasamaṅgino sukhapaṭisaṃvedanābhogo n’atthi, evaṃ sante pi, yasmā tassa nāmakāyena sampayuttaṃ sukhaṃ, yaṃ vā taṃ nāmakāyasampayuttaṃ sukhaṃ, taṃsamuṭṭhānen’assa yasmā atipaṇītena rūpena rūpakāyo phuṭo, yassa phuṭattā jhāna vuṭṭhito pi sukhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeyya, tasmā etaṃ atthaṃ dassento, sukhaṃ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti ti āha.” Vism., p. 132.

[2] Vibh., p. 275.

[3] Narada, *Manual*, pp. 131-32.

After attaining the third *jhāna*, the yogin proceeds to perfect it through the five types of mastery, and then prepares himself for the next step.

The Fourth Jhāna

The Attainment of the Jhāna

Having achieved the fivefold mastery over the third *jhāna*, the meditator enters it, emerges from it, and reviews its constituting factors. When he reviews the factors the meditator sees that the attainment is threatened by the nearness of rapture (*pīti*); this is the fault of proximate corruption. The inherent defect is the presence of happiness (*sukha*), which he sees to be a relatively gross factor that weakens the entire attainment. As he reflects equanimous feeling and one-pointedness appear more subtle, peaceful, and secure, and thus more desirable.

Because of their proximity, happiness in the third *jhāna* is threatened by the possibility of a re-arising of rapture. Rapture was suppressed with the attainment of the third *jhāna*, but threatens to swell up again due to its natural association with happiness. Therefore if the meditator is not mindful his meditation can fall back to a lower level conjoined with rapture. The attainment of the fourth *jhāna* appears valuable as a protection from such a fall. It is also desired because of its more profound peacefulness and subtlety, stemming from its factors of equanimous feeling and one-pointedness of mind.

Then, taking as his object the same counterpart sign he took for the earlier attainments, the meditator repeats his concentration with the purpose of abandoning the gross factor of happiness and attaining the higher *jhāna*. When his practice matures the mind enters upon the thought-process culminating in absorption of the fourth *jhāna*. First the stream of consciousness (*bhavaṅga*) vibrates and gets cut off, after which there arises the mind-door adverting with the counterpart sign as object. This is followed by four or five impulsions (*javana*) on the same object, the last of which is an impulsion of the fourth *jhāna*. The three or four impulsions of the preliminary stage (*parikamma*) retain *vitakka* and *vicāra*, but because the *jhāna* to follow involves neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, the preliminary impulsions, too, involve the same feeling. Thus they are devoid of rapture and happiness, as these are incompatible with neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.[1]

The Four Conditions

The standard suttanta description of the fourth *jhāna* is as follows:

> With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.[2] (Wr. tr.).

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[1] PP., pp. 170-71.

[2] "Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsatipārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati." DN. 1:75.

The first part of this formula, explaining the preliminaries to the attainment of the *jhāna*, is said in the Mahāvedalla Sutta to express the four conditions needed for the fourth *jhāna*:

> There are four conditions, friend, for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant mind-deliverance. Here, friend, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*… These are the four conditions for the attainment of the neither-painful-nor-pleasant mind-deliverance.[1]

The four conditions referred to by the sutta are

1. the abandoning of pleasure;
2. the abandoning of pain;
3. the disappearance of joy; and
4. the disappearance of grief.

Before we can discuss these four conditions it is first necessary to determine the precise meaning of their terms.

1. Pleasure (*sukha*)

In our analysis of the word *sukha* in our discussion of the first *jhāna*, we noted that *sukha* has both a general and a narrow application. In a general sense *sukha* signifies happiness or pleasant feeling, covering both bodily pleasant feeling (*kāyika sukha*) and mental pleasant feeling (*cetasika sukha*). In a narrow sense *sukha* is used to signify exclusively bodily pleasant feeling; it is then contrasted with mental pleasant feeling, which is denoted by another word, *somanassa*, here translated "joy."[2]

Now the *sukha* spoken of as a factor of the first three *jhānas* is mental pleasant feeling, that is *somanassa* or joy. As we saw, the Vibhaṅga defines the *sukha* of the first *jhāna* as "mental pleasure, mental happiness, the felt pleasure and happiness born of mind-contact, pleasurable and happy feeling born of mind-contact."[3] (Wr. tr.). The same holds true of the *sukha* mentioned in the formulas for the second and third *jhāna*. But in the fourth *jhāna* description, the *sukha* which is said to be abandoned as a pre-requisite for entering the *jhāna* undergoes a shift in meaning: it now signifies bodily pleasure or physical happiness (*kāyikasukha*). Thus the Vibhaṅga defines the *sukha* intended in the phrase *sukhassa ca pahānā*, "with the abandoning of pleasure," as follows:

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[1] PP., p. 174. "Cattāro kho āvuso paccayā adukkhamasukhāya cetovimuttiyā samāpattiyā. Idh'āvuso bhikkhu sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsatipārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ime kho āvuso cattāro paccayā adukkhamasukhāya cetovimuttiyā samāpattiyā'ti." MN. 1:296.

[2] See Chapter IV, p. 140.

[3] "Cetasikaṃ sātaṃ cetasikaṃ sukhaṃ cetosamphassajaṃ sātaṃ sukhaṃ vedayitaṃ cetosamphassajā sātā sukhā vedanā." Vibh., p. 267.

> Therein, what is happiness [pleasure]? Bodily pleasure; bodily happiness, the felt pleasure and happiness born of body-contact, pleasurable and happy feeling born of body-contact – this is called ‘happiness’ [pleasure].[1] (Wr. tr.).

Mental pleasure, or happiness, will be indicated later in the formula by the word *somanassa*.

2. Pain (*dukkha*)

We see from the formula that the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* presupposes the prior abandonment of *dukkha* or pain. Like the word *sukha* the word *dukkha* has, besides its broader philosophical meaning dealt with in the Four Noble Truths, a twofold meaning in relation to feelings: on the one side it signifies all unpleasurable feeling, physical and mental; on the other it signifies exclusively bodily pain. When it is used to signify bodily pain it is contrasted with *domanassa*, “grief”, which then means mental unpleasurable feeling. In the present context *dukkha* bears the narrower meaning. As the Vibhaṅga explains, it is bodily painful feeling:

> Therein, what is pain? Bodily displeasure, bodily pain, the felt displeasure and pain born of body-contact, unpleasurable and painful feeling born of body-contact – this is called pain.[2] (Wr. tr.).

3. Joy (*somanassa*)

The joy that is made to disappear prior to the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* is mental happiness, the feeling present as *sukha* in the first three *jhānas*. The Vibhaṅga says:

> Therein, what is joy? Mental pleasure, mental happiness, the felt pleasure and happiness born of mind-contact, pleasurable and happy feeling born of mind contact – this is called joy.[3] (Wr. tr.).

4. Grief (*domanassa*)

Grief is the opposite of joy, that is, it is mental unpleasurable feeling. The Vibhaṅga defines the term occurring in the fourth *jhāna* formula thus:

> Therein, what is grief? Mental displeasure, mental pain, the felt displeasure and pain born of mind-contact, the unpleasurable and painful feeling born of mind-contact – this is called grief.[4] (Wr. tr.).

The fourth *jhāna* is said to arise following the abandonment of pleasure and pain and the disappearance of joy and grief. This statement seems to suggest that all four feelings first disappear prior to the attainment of the fourth *jhāna*. Such an interpretation, however, is not correct. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya the Buddha says that the faculty of pain (*dukkhindriya*) ceases without remainder when the first *jhāna* is attained, the faculty of grief (*domanassindriya*) when the second *jhāna* is attained, the faculty of pleasure (*sukhindriya*) when the third *jhāna* is attained, and the faculty of joy (*somanassindriya*) when the fourth *jhāna* is attained.[1] Thus three of the four conditions for the fourth *jhāna* are fulfilled with the attainment of the first three *jhānas*, and only the fourth, the disappearance of joy, with the actual entrance upon the fourth *jhāna*.

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[1] “Tattha katamaṃ sukhaṃ? Yaṃ kāyikaṃ sataṃ kāyikaṃ sukhaṃ kāyasamphassajaṃ sātaṃ sukhaṃ vedayitaṃ kāyasamphassajā sātā sukhā vedanā. Idaṃ vuccati sukhaṃ.” Vibh., p. 270.

[2] “Tattha katamaṃ dukkhaṃ? Yaṃ kāyikaṃ asātaṃ kāyikaṃ dukkhaṃ kāyasamphassajaṃ asātaṃ dukkhaṃ vedayitaṃ kāyasamphassajā asātā dukkhā vedanā. Idaṃ vuccati dukkhaṃ.” Vibh., p. 271.

[3] “Tattha katamaṃ somanassaṃ? Yaṃ cetasikaṃ sātaṃ cetasikaṃ sukhaṃ cetosamphassajaṃ sātaṃ sukhaṃ vedayitaṃ cetosamphassajā sātā sukhā vedanā. Idaṃ vuccati somanassaṃ.” Vibh., p. 271.

[4] *Ibid.*

The *Visuddhimagga* qualifies the Buddha's statement further and says that the four feelings – pain, grief, pleasure, and joy – actually cease at the moments of access to the first, second, third, and fourth *jhānas*, respectively. However, they only undergo "reinforced cessation" (*atisayanirodhattā*) with the attainment of the *jhāna* itself, which is why the Buddha says that in the *jhāna* they "cease without remainder" (*aparisesaṃ nirujjhati*).[2] Thus bodily pain, which ceases in the first *jhāna* access, can arise again prior to *jhāna* on account of insect bites, an uncomfortable seat, cold, heat, etc. But in the *jhāna* the whole body is suffused with bliss due to pervasion by rapture, and the pain-faculty then completely ceases, beaten out by opposition. Therefore the reinforced cessation of the pain-faculty takes place only with absorption in the first *jhāna*, not with access.[3]

Similarly, the grief faculty initially ceases in the second *jhāna* access, but can arise again when the body is weary and the mind vexed, due to the presence of applied and sustained thought. But at the level of second *jhāna* absorption, where applied and sustained thought are absent, mental grief does not reappear. The bodily pleasure-faculty, which ceases in the third *jhāna* access, can reappear when the meditator's body is pervaded by the subtle materiality originated by consciousness, but it does not arise in the third *jhāna* absorption where the rapture producing such materiality has ceased. Likewise, the faculty of joy which has ceased in the fourth *jhāna* access could be reawakened due to the proximity of the third *jhānic* happiness, but not in the fourth *jhāna* absorption where it is fully suppressed by equanimity.[4]

When three other feelings have been abandoned earlier, the question comes up why all four feelings are collected together and negated here, in the description of the fourth *jhāna*. The *Visuddhimagga* gives four reasons for grouping them. The first is to make it easier to grasp the nature of neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. The latter, being subtle and difficult to recognize, has to be apprehended by negating the alternatives, like a refractory cow that has to be caught by gathering all the cows in a pen and releasing the others one by one. The second reason is to show the condition for the neither-painful-nor-pleasurable mind-deliverance, which is the abandonment of the other four feelings. A third reason is to recommend this *jhāna* by showing its freedom from the grosser types of feeling. And a fourth is to show that greed and hatred are very far away.

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[1] SN. 5:213-15.

[2] Vism., p. 134. PP., p. 172.

[3] Vism., p. 134. PP., pp. 172-73.

[4] PP., pp. 173-74. Vism., p. 135.

Pleasure is a condition for joy, which causes greed to possess the object producing pleasure, so when there is no pleasure greed is far away. Pain is a condition for grief, which causes hatred, so when there is no pain, hatred is far away.[1]

New Elements in the Jhāna

The fourth *jhāna* formula introduces several new terms and phrases which have not been used in the formulas for the preceding *jhānas*. First of all, it introduces a new feeling. This is the feeling of neither-pain-nor-pleasure (*adukkhamasukha*), which remains after the other four types of feeling have been eliminated. The Vibhaṅga explains *adukkhamasukha* as follows:

> Neither-pain-nor-pleasure: that mental concomitant which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, felt neither-pain-nor-pleasure born of mind-contact, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling born of mind-contact – this is called neither-pain-nor-pleasure.[2] (Wr. tr.).

Neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, also called equanimous feeling (*upekkhāvedanā*), replaces *sukha* as the concomitant feeling of the *jhāna*. It also figures as an actual *jhāna*-factor. Thus this *jhāna* has two factors: neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling and one-pointedness of mind. Previously the ascent from one *jhāna* to the next was marked by the progressive elimination of the coarser *jhāna*-factors without any replacement. But in the move from the third to fourth *jhāna* there takes place a substitution. While one-pointedness remains constant, equanimous feeling enters to replace happiness, which has been abandoned.

Simultaneously with the progressive elimination and refinement of *jhāna* factors, there has occurred in the description of each succeeding *jhāna* the introduction of several new and complex elements. The second formula introduced confidence and mental unification, the third *jhāna* formula equanimity, mindfulness, and discernment. Consistent with this we now find in the move to the fourth *jhāna*, besides the abandonment of the grosser feelings and the augmentation of a new feeling, a new phrase composed of already familiar terms suggesting a new element – "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity." The Pāli compound *upekkhāsatipārisuddhi* is explained by the Vibhaṅga in a way that makes it plain that the relation between the two terms is causal, not merely copulative: "This mindfulness is cleared, purified, clarified by equanimity; hence it is said to have purity of mindfulness due to equanimity."[3] (Wr. tr.). The *Visuddhimagga* also supports this interpretation: "For the mindfulness in this *jhāna* is quite purified, and its purification is effected by equanimity, not by anything else."[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] "Adukkhamasukhanti yaṃ cetasikaṃ neva sātaṃ nāsātaṃ cetosamphassajaṃ adukkhamasukhaṃ vedayitaṃ ceto samphassajā adukkhamasukhā vedanā. Tena vuccati adukkhamasukhanti." Vibh., p. 271.

[3] Vibh., p. 271.

[4] PP., p. 174. Vism., p. 136.

The equanimity which purifies the mindfulness, according to the Vibhaṅga, is not neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, but mental neutrality (*majjhattatā cittassa*), the same as "specific neutrality" (*tatramajjhattatā*) discussed above.[1] Thus this *jhāna* has two kinds of eqanimity – [1] equanimous feeling, the affective tone which inclines neither towards pleasure nor pain, and [2] specific neutrality, the mental attitude of sublime impartiality free from attachment and aversion. Though the two are different factors, the one belonging to the aggregate of feelings (*vedanākkhandha*) and the other to the aggregate of mental formations (*sankhārakkhandha*), their concomitance is not fortuitous; for as specific neutrality becomes more and more refined it naturally tends to come into association with equanimous feeling, its hedonic counterpart.

Of the two, as we have seen, it is equanimity as specific neutrality that purifies mindfulness. Though both equanimity as specific neutrality and mindfulness are present in the earlier three *jhānas*, none among these is said to have purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. The reason is that the equanimity in the preceding *jhānas* is not purified, and thus cannot purify mindfulness and the other conascent states. In the other *jhānas* equanimity lacks clarity and distinctness because it is overshadowed by the opposing states and because it lacks association with equanimous feeling. The *Visuddhimagga* illustrates this with a vivid simile:

> …just as, although a crescent moon exists by day but is not purified or clear since it is outshone by the sun's radiance in the daytime or since it is deprived of the night, which is its ally owing to gentleness and owing to helpfulness to it, so too, this crescent moon of equanimity consisting in specific neutrality exists in the first *jhāna*, etc., but it is not purified since it is outshone by the glare of the opposing states consisting in applied thought, etc., and since it is deprived of the night of equanimity as feeling for its ally; and because it is not purified, the conascent mindfulness and other states are not purified either, like the unpurified crescent moon's radiance by day. That is why no one among these [first three *jhānas*] is said to have purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.[2]

But in the fourth *jhāna* the "crescent moon of specific neutrality" is completely pure because it is not outshone by the opposing states and because it appears against the background of equanimous feeling. Since it is pure, it is able to purify mindfulness and the other associated factors, just as a purified crescent moon is able to send forth a purified radiance.

So pervasive is the degree of purity reached in the fourth *jhāna* that to illustrate it the Buddha no longer uses the image of one thing suffusing another, as he did for the happiness and rapture of the earlier *jhānas*. Instead he employs the image of one thing covering another, that is, a white cloth covering a man's whole body from top to bottom:

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[1] Vibh., p. 271.

[2] PP, p. 175. Vism., p. 136. *Expositor*, 1:238.

> Suppose a man were sitting wrapped in white cloth covering his whole body from head to toes, so that there were not a single spot of his body that is not covered by the white cloth. Similarly the bhikkhu sits pervading his whole body with a pure and lucid mind so that not a single spot of his entire body is left unpervaded by that pure and lucid mind.[1] (Wr. tr.).

The Abhidhammic system counts thirty factors in the fourth *jhāna*. From the original set of thirty-three, *vitakka*, *vicāra* and *pīti* are excluded, and the feeling is changed to *adukkhamasukha*. Compassion and sympathetic joy do not unite with this *jhāna*, as they require association with pleasant feeling while this *jhāna* has neutral feeling.

The Fivefold Scheme of the Jhānas

Whereas the suttas arrange the *jhānas* into a fourfold system, the texts of the Abhidhammapiṭaka present the same states in two ways – in terms of the familiar fourfold system of the suttas and also in terms of a fivefold system. The fourfold presentation of *jhāna* becomes fivefold through the separate rather than simultaneous elimination of applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*). The *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* spells out the constitution of the five *jhānas* one by one in terms of their factors:

> First *jhāna* consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, joy [rapture], happiness, and one-pointedness.
>
> Second *jhāna* consciousness together with sustained application, joy [rapture], happiness, and one-pointedness.
>
> Third *jhāna* consciousness together with joy [rapture], happiness and one-pointedness.
>
> Fourth *jhāna* consciousness together with happiness and one-pointedness.
>
> Fifth *jhāna* consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.[2]

The question may arise why a fivefold system should be presented along with the fourfold system. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* offers two reasons: one is out of consideration for the differing inclinations of individuals (*puggalajjhāsaya*), the other is for the sake of elegance of teaching (*desanāvilāsa*). It explains the first by reference to the tradition that the Buddha first expounded the Abhidhammapiṭaka to the devas of the heavenly worlds:

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[1] "Seyyathāpi mahārāja puriso odātena vatthena sasīsaṃ pārupitvā nisinno assa, nāssa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa odātena vatthena apphuṭaṃ assa, evaṃ eva kho mahārāja bhikkhu imaṃ eva kāyaṃ parisuddhena cetasā pariyodātena pharitvā nisinno hoti, nāssa kiñci sabbāvato kāyassa parisuddhena cetasā pariyodātena apphuṭaṃ hoti." DN. 1:76.

[2] "Vitakkavicārapītisukh'ekaggatāsahitaṃ paṭhamajjhāna kusalacittaṃ.

Vicārapītisukh'ekaggatā sahitaṃ dutiyajjhānakusalacittaṃ.

Pītisukh'ekaggatā sahitaṃ tatiyajjhānakusalacittaṃ.

Sukh'ekaggatāsahitaṃ catutthajjhānakusalacittaṃ.

Upekkh'ekaggatā sahitaṃ pañcamajjhānakusalacittaṃ." Nārada, *Manual*, pp. 42-44. Note that "initial application" is *vitakka*, which we render as "applied thought" and "sustained application" is *vicāra*, our "sustained thought."

> In the assembled gathering of the spirits (*devas*), to some spirits only initial application of mind appeared gross, and sustained application of mind, rapture, pleasure, one-pointedness of mind appeared good.[1]

It was for the benefit of those *devas*, according to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* that the Buddha expanded the fourfold scheme of *jhānas* into a fivefold scheme. In explanation of the second reason the commentary says:

> Hence, because of the vastness of his knowledge, the Teacher, who is skillful in arranging his teaching, and who has attained the [art of] embellishing it, fixes that teaching by whatever factor that has come to hand, and in any way he chooses.[2]

In following the fivefold system of *jhānas*, a meditator who has mastered the first *jhāna* and aspires to go higher reviews its factors and finds only applied thought (*vitakka*) to be gross. Thus he endeavors to eliminate only applied thought, and attains a second *jhāna* which is devoid of applied thought (*avitakkaṃ*) but still associated with sustained thought (*vicāramattaṃ*). This second *jhāna* of the fivefold scheme is the addition which is not present in the fourfold scheme. After mastering the second *jhāna*, the meditator finds sustained thought to be gross, eliminates it, and attains a third *jhāna* which is identical with the second *jhāna* of the fourfold system. The fourth and fifth *jhānas* of the fivefold system are the same as the third and fourth *jhānas* of the fourfold system, respectively.

The two different systems seem to answer to the differing capacities of meditators for progressing along the scale of mental unification. This difference in capacity could stem either from their differing abilities to comprehend *vitakka* and *vicāra* simultaneously or from their differing abilities to abandon them simultaneously. The progress of one following the fourfold method is more rapid, as he eliminates two factors in moving from the first to second *jhāna*. Yet both start from the same place, move through the same range of spiritual experience, and (providing they succeed in reaching the highest *jhāna* in their respective systems) arrive in the end at the same destination.

The two meditators can be compared to two mountain climbers. Both start out at the foot of a mountain at the same time. Both may reach the same initial rest station at the same time. But then their rates of progress may show a difference. The stronger may continue on more quickly, bypass the second rest station, and go right on to the third before stopping. The weaker will advance more slowly and have to make separate stops at the second and third rest stations. Both will stop at the fourth and at the fifth station at the top. Thus for both mountain climbers their position is the same when starting out at the bottom of the mountain, at the first station, and when reaching the top. They differ only in their rates of progress and in the number of stops they have to make to arrive at the top. Similarly for the two meditators of the fourfold and fivefold systems. Their first *jhāna* is the same, and their final achievement is the same. But the follower of the fivefold system has made an additional stop passed over by the follower of the fourfold system. This stop is the added second *jhāna* of the fivefold system, free from applied thought but having sustained thought.

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[1] *Expositor*, 1:239. "Sannisinnadevaparisāya kira ekaccānaṃ devānaṃ vitakko eva oḷārikato upaṭṭhāti, vicārapītisukh'ekaggatā santato." Dhs.A., p. 223.

[2] *Expositor*, 1:240. "Tasmā ñāṇamahattatāya desanāvidhānesu kusalo desanā vilāsappatto satthā yaṃ yaṃ aṇgaṃ labbhati; tassa tassa vasena yathā yathā labbhati tathā tathā desanaṃ niyameti." Dhs.A., p. 224.

The fivefold reckoning of *jhāna* first appears in the Abhidhammapiṭaka and remains as a distinctive feature of the "Abhidhamma method," yet this system has a definite basis in the suttas. Though the suttas always speak of four *jhānas*, they divide concentration (*samādhi*) into three types: a concentration with applied thought and sustained thought, a concentration without applied thought but with sustained thought, and a concentration without either applied thought or sustained thought.[1] Thus in the Saṃyutta Nikāya the Buddha calls this threefold concentration the "path to the unconditioned"[2] and in the Aṅguttara Nikāya he declares:

> When, monk, this concentration is thus made-become and developed by you, then you should make this concentration become with initial and sustained application [of thought], make it become without initial application [of thought], but with sustained application [of thought] only; make it become without either initial or sustained application [of thought].[3]

The commentary to the Aṅguttara Nikāya glosses this as "attaining fourfold and fivefold *jhāna*."[4] (Wr. tr.). The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* explains that while the fourfold scheme of *jhānas* includes concentration with both applied and sustained thought and without either of the two, it does not deal with that concentration having only sustained thought; thence an additional *jhāna* necessitating a fivefold system is required to deal with it.[5]

In the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* the five *jhānas* are presented only in skeletal form, in terms of their defining factors. In the Dhammasaṅgaṇi and the Vibhaṅga they are presented with full formulas. Their descriptions of the first, third, fourth, and fifth *jhānas* are identical with each other, and with the standard descriptions of the first, second, third, and fourth *jhānas* respectively of the fourfold scheme. However, in their formulas for the second *jhāna*, the two canonical Abhidhamma treatises differ in some interesting respects. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi formula runs as follows: “He enters and abides in the second *jhāna*, which is without applied thought, has only sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration.”[1] (Wr. tr.). The Vibhaṅga formula states:

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[1] The Pāli for the three is: *savitakko savicāro samādhi*, *avitakkavicāramatto samādhi*, and *avitakko avicāro samādhi*.

[2] SN. 4:362-63. DN. 3:274.

[3] GS. 4:200. "Yato kho te bhikkhu ayaṃ samādhi evaṃ bhāvito hoti bahulīkato, tato tvaṃ bhikkhu imaṃ samādiṃ savitakkaṃpi savicāraṃ bhāveyyāsi, avitakkampi vicāramattaṃ bhāveyyāsi avitakkaṃ pi avicāraṃ bhāveyyāsi." AN. 4:301.

[4] "Catukkapañcakajjhānaṃ pāpiyamāno." AN.A. 3:242.

[5] Dhs.A., P. 224. *Expositor*, 1:240.

> Quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, he enters and dwells in the second *jhāna* which is accompanied only by sustained thought with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.[2] (Wr. tr.).

Thus the Vibhaṅga version includes a phrase about seclusion from sense pleasures and unwholesome states, while the Dhammasaṅgaṇi version omits this and instead simply describes the *jhāna*. Again, the two differ in the way they qualify the rapture and happiness existing in the *jhāna*. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi says they are “born of concentration” (*samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ*), the Vibhaṅga that they are born of seclusion (*vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ*).

The preliminary phrase in the Vibhaṅga version appears to be an inappropriate repetition of the beginning of the first *jhāna* formula, and thus can perhaps be dismissed as an editorial error made by the ancient redactors of the text. The second difference between the two works, that concerning the cause of rapture and happiness, may also be due to an editorial oversight, but is more difficult to resolve. When explaining the phrase *samādhijaṃ* in connection with the second *jhāna* of the tetradic scheme, the *Visuddhimagga* said that “born of concentration” could be understood to mean that the rapture and happiness of the second *jhāna* are born of the first *jhāna* concentration, or born of the associated second *jhāna* concentration. It then added:

> It is only this concentration [of the second *jhāna*] that is quite worthy to be called ‘concentration’ because of its complete confidence and extreme immobility due to absence of disturbance by applied and sustained thought.[3]

Now if we accept the idea that the concentration responsible for producing the *pīti* and *sukha* of the second tetradic *jhāna* is the first *jhāna* concentration, then it follows logically that the *pīti* and *sukha* of the second *jhāna* in the fivefold scheme can also be born of the same concentration. Thus the reading of the Dhammasaṅgaṇi would be correct. However, we also have to take account of the *Visuddhimagga*’s remark that the word “concentration” is only fully appropriate in the absence of disturbance by applied and sustained thought. Then, because sustained thought is present in the pentadic second *jhāna*, it is questionable whether the phrase “born of concentration” can belong to the formula. In this case the preference would go to the Vibhaṅga reading. Due to the ambiguity of interpretative method, the difference seems impossible to settle with complete definiteness, and must just be left for the present as unresolved.

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1. “Avitakkaṃ vicāramattaṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.” Dhs., p. 47.

2. “Vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi avitakkaṃ vicāramattaṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.” Vibh., p. 275.

3. PP., p. 164. “… ayaṃ eva samādhi samādhī ti vattabbataṃ arahati, vitakkavicārakkhobhavirahena ativiya acalattā suppasannattā ca.” Vism., p. 127.

Concluding Remarks

From our inquiry two important points emerge concerning the dynamics of *jhāna* attainment. First, the ascent from *jhāna* to *jhāna* is signalled by a progressive elimination of *jhāna* factors. The first *jhāna*, as we saw, has five factors. In moving to the second *jhāna* two factors, *vitakka* and *vicāra*, are abandoned, in moving to the third *pīti* is abandoned, and in moving to the fourth *sukha* is abandoned, with "neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling" coming in to replace *sukha*. This process of elimination, we can assume, involves concurrently an intensification of concentration, whereby the energy that was diffused among the coarser, more numerous *jhāna* factors comes to be invested in the subtler and fewer factors, enabling the concentration to gain in depth and intensity.

The second point to be noticed is that in the formulas for each of the ascending *jhānas* new elements were mentioned, most of which did not correspond to any *jhāna* factors. The second *jhāna* formula added "internal confidence," the equivalent of faith, a non-factor. The third *jhāna* formula added equanimity, mindfulness, and discernment, and the fourth added "purification of mindfulness due to equanimity." These elements, though not themselves *jhāna* factors, are still deserving of mention. The *jhāna* factors are the states which directly exercise the *jhānic* functions of countering the hindrances and unifying the mind on the object. But beyond these can be found, in each *jhāna*, a number of other factors which contribute to the distinctive character of the attainment, and these have been selected for inclusion in the formulas descriptive of the *jhānas*. This procedure helps make it clear that the *jhānas* are not abstract states completely susceptible to schematic analysis, but living experiences with a vitality and directness that elude mere intellectual treatment.

Chapter Six

BEYOND THE FOUR JHĀNAS

Following the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* there are several options open to a meditator. These can be grouped together into three basic categories. One is the attainment of the four *āruppas*, immaterial *jhānas* involving further concentration and refinement of mental serenity. A second – which as we will see generally presupposes the immaterial *jhānas* as prerequisites – is the development of the *abhiññās*, higher faculties of knowledge, in some cases issuing in supernormal powers. A third alternative is the cultivation of wisdom through insight into the nature of phenomena, which brings the destruction of the defilements and results in emancipation from *saṃsāra*. In the present chapter we will explore the first and second of these three alternatives, closing with some remarks concerning the relationship between *jhānas* and rebirth. Then in the next two chapters we will examine the place of *jhāna* in the development of wisdom leading to final deliverance.

Throughout the following discussion it should be borne in mind that the attainment of the immaterial *jhānas* and the exercise of supernormal powers are not essential to achieving the ultimate Buddhist goal, the realization of *nibbāna*. What is essential is the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path, which does not necessarily include the *āruppas* and *abhiññās*. However, because these latter two sets of practices can contribute to the growth of calm and insight and embellish the spiritual perfection of a yogin, the Buddha included them in his discipline. There they have remained as options open for meditators inclined to develop them.

The Four Immaterial Jhānas

Beyond the four *jhānas* lie four higher attainments in the scale of mental unification. These attainments are collectively known as the four formless or immaterial *jhānas* (*arūpajjhānas*); the lower four attainments come to be called, in contrast, the four fine material *jhānas* (*rūpajjhānas*) or simply the four *jhānas*. The immaterial *jhānas* are individually designated, not by numerical names like their predecessors, but by the names of their objective spheres: the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception.[1] They receive the designation "formless" or "immaterial" for two reasons: [1] because they are achieved by surmounting all perceptions of material form (*rūpa*), even of the subtle material form of the counterpart sign which serves as the object for the fine material *jhānas*; and [2] because they are the subjective counterparts of the immaterial planes of existence.

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[1] In Pāli: *ākāsānañcāyatana*, *viññāṇañcāyatana*, *ākiñcaññāyatana*, and *nevesaññānāsaññāyatana*.

The terms *rūpajjhāna* and *arūpajjhāna*, fine material *jhāna* and immaterial *jhāna*, do not appear in the main *nikāyas* of the Suttapiṭaka. The terms *rūpāvacaraṃ jhānaṃ* and *arūpāvacaraṃ jhānaṃ*, "fine material sphere *jhāna*" and "immaterial sphere *jhāna*," appear occasionally in the Abhidhammapiṭaka,[1] but it is not until the period of the commentaries that such names became common. In the suttas the formless attainments are referred to sometimes by the collective name *āruppa* "immaterial states," or as the *cattāro āruppā*, "the four immaterial states."[2] They are also called "peaceful emancipations, transcending material form, immaterial" (Wr. tr.) or simply "peaceful abodes".[3] Most often they are merely enumerated in their order of attainment without being brought together under any group label.

Before turning to consider the immaterial *jhānas* individually, some important remarks are called for concerning their "internal constitution." We saw in the previous chapter that the movement from any lower *jhāna* to its successor involves the elimination of the coarser *jhāna* factors. The refinement of consciousness that occurs through this movement thus hinges upon actual changes being effected in the composition of the states of consciousness corresponding to the *jhānas*. However, in ascending from the fourth fine material *jhāna* to the first immaterial *jhāna*, and then from one immaterial *jhāna* to another, no changes in the compositional factors of consciousness are required. In other words, the fourth fine material *jhāna* and all four formless attainments have precisely the same kinds of factors entering into their internal constitution. The factors in each higher attainment are subtler than those in its predecessors, more peaceful and more sublime, but they do not differ in number or in their essential nature. The climb from one formless attainment to another is brought about by changing the object of concentration, not by eliminating or replacing component factors. For this reason the treatises of the Abhidhammapiṭaka, such as the Dhammasaṅgaṇi and the Vibhaṅga, treat the four *āruppas* as modes of the fourth *jhāna*, combining the formula for each with the general formula for the fourth *jhāna*.[4] All five states – the fourth fine material *jhāna* and the four immaterial *jhānas* – contain the same basic constellation of mental concomitants (*cetasikas*) and the same two *jhāna* factors, namely one-pointedness and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. Thence from the standpoint of the Abhidhamma, which defines a class of consciousness (*citta*) by its components, the four types of consciousness belonging to the four formless attainments are modes of the fourth *jhāna* consciousness according to the fourfold scheme, and of the fifth *jhāna* consciousness according to the fivefold scheme.

The First Āruppa: *The Base of Boundless Space*

The four formless attainments must be achieved in the order in which they are presented in the texts – that is, beginning with the base of boundless space and culminating in the base of neither perception nor non-perception. The motivation which initially leads a yogin to seek the immaterial states is a clear perception of the dangers posed by gross physical matter. As it is said in the Majjhima Nikāya:

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[1] Dhs., p. 145.

[2] DN. 3:275.

[3] "Santā vimokkhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā," MN. 1:33. "Santā vihārā." MN. 1:41.

[4] Dhs., pp. 68-69. Vibh., p. 276.

> It is in virtue of matter that wielding of sticks, wielding of knives, quarrels, brawls and disputes take place; but that does not exist at all in the immaterial state, and in this expectation he enters upon the way of dispassion for only material things, for the fading and cessation of only those.[1]

He might also become repelled by matter as a result of considering the multitude of afflictions to which the physical body is vulnerable, such as eye diseases, ear diseases, and so forth. Aspiring to escape from these dangers connected with material form, the meditator must first attain the four *jhānas* of the fine material sphere. He then enters the fourth *jhāna*, taking as his object any of the *kasiṇas* except the limited space *kasiṇa*.[2] The limited space *kasiṇa* is unsuitable because it does not allow for a separation between the *kasiṇa* itself and the space it covers, a separation, we will see, necessary for reaching the first formless *jhāna*.

By achieving the fourth fine material *jhāna* the meditator has risen above gross matter but still has not completely transcended all material form. The reason is that the self-luminous counterpart sign, the object of his *jhāna*, is a subtle type of material form. To reach the formless attainments he must desire to surmount as well the materiality of the *kasiṇa*. Such a desire can be induced by contemplating the *kasiṇa* materiality as the counterpart of gross matter sharing to some extent its defects. Buddhaghosa illustrates how this is done by means of a simile. If a timid man is pursued by a snake in the forest he will flee from it as fast as he can. If he should later see something resembling the snake, such as a palm leaf with a streak painted on it, a creeper, a rope, or a crack in the ground, he would become fearful and anxious and would not want to look at it. The time the meditator was frightened by seeing the danger in gross matter is like the time the man saw the snake. When the meditator escapes gross matter by reaching the fourth *jhāna*, this is like the time the man flees from the snake. The time the meditator observes the subtle matter of the *kasiṇa* to be the counterpart of gross matter and wants to surmount it is like the time the man sees the object resembling a snake and is afraid to look at it.[3]

Once he has generated a strong desire to reach the immaterial *jhānas* the meditator must achieve the fivefold mastery over the fourth *jhāna*. Then, after emerging from the fourth *jhāna*, he perceives the dangers in the *jhāna* and the benefits in the higher attainment. The dangers are: [1] that the fourth *jhāna* has an object consisting in material form and hence is still connected with gross physical matter; [2] that it is close to happiness, a factor of the third *jhāna*: and [3] that it is grosser than the immaterial attainments. On

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1. PP., p. 354. "Dissante kho pana rūpādhikaranaṃ daṇḍādāna satthādāna kaḷaha viggaha vivāda, n'atthi kho pan'etaṃ sabbaso ārūpeti: so iti patisañcikkhāya rūpānaṃ yeva nibbidāya, virāgāya, nirodhāya paṭipanno hoti." MN. 1:410.

2. See above, Chapter II, p. 42.

3. PP., pp. 354-55. Vism., p. 272.

the other hand, the meditator sees the base of boundless space as more peaceful and sublime than the fourth *jhāna* and as more safely removed from materiality. However, there is no effort to eliminate *jhāna* factors, as both the fourth fine material *jhāna* and the four immaterial *jhānas* have the same two factors, as we mentioned.[1]

By reflecting on its dangers the meditator ends his attachment to the fourth *jhāna*; he then sets out to reach the base of boundless space. The method for attaining this first formless *jhāna* is to mentally extend the *kasiṇa* "to the limit of the world-sphere, or as far as he likes," and then to remove the *kasiṇa* by attending exclusively to the space it covered without adverting to the *kasiṇa*.[2]

The original *kasiṇa* which provided the preliminary sign (*parikammanimitta*) for concentration was, as we saw, a disc-like object, in the case of the earth *kasiṇa* a disc filled with reddish-brown clay. When practising preliminary concentration the meditator kept focussing his mind upon this disc until there appeared the learning sign (*uggahanimitta*), i.e. a mental image apprehended as clearly as the physical object. Concentration on the learning sign gave rise to the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāganimitta*), the conceptualized image used as the object for access concentration and the fine material *jhānas*. After entering each *jhāna*, the meditator learned to extend the sign outwards by degrees, making the visualized *kasiṇa* cover increasingly larger areas up to a world-system or more. Now, to reach the base of boundless space, the meditator must remove the *kasiṇa* by attending exclusively to the space it has been made to cover without attending to the *kasiṇa*:

> When he is removing it, he neither folds it up like a mat nor withdraws it like a cake from a tin. It is simply that he does not advert to it or give attention to it or review it; it is when he neither adverts to it nor gives attention to it nor reviews it but gives his attention exclusively to the space touched by it [regarding that] as 'Space, space', that he is said to 'remove the kasina'.[3]

Taking as his object the space left after the removal of the *kasiṇa*, the yogin adverts to it as "boundless space, boundless space," or simply as "space, space," striking at it with applied and sustained thought. He cultivates this practice again and again, repeatedly developing it until the concept reaches maturity. When his development is fully matured, then the consciousness pertaining to the base of boundless space arises with boundless space as its object. It is the first wholesome consciousness of the immaterial sphere, and appears in the cognitive series in the same place that the first *jhāna* appeared in its own thought-process. In the prior moments of the series, the three or four moments of access concentration are always associated with equanimous feeling and pertain to the sense sphere; the fourth or fifth moment, the moment of absorption, pertains to the imaterial sphere.[4]

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[1] PP., p. 355. Vism., p. 272.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] PP., p. 355. Vism., p. 272.

[4] PP., p. 356. Vism., p. 272.

The standard formula for the base of boundless space, as presented in the suttas, is as follows:

> With the complete surmounting of perceptions of matter, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, with non-attention to perceptions of variety [aware of] ‘unbounded space’, he enters upon and dwells in the base consisting of boundless space.[1]

There are four phrases in this formula worth discussing separately:

1. with the complete surmounting of perceptions of matter (*sabbaso rūpasaññānaṃ samatikkamā*);
2. with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance (*paṭigha saññānaṃ atthagamā*);
3. with non-attention to perceptions of variety (*nānattasaññānaṃ amanasikārā*); and
4. unbounded space (*ananto ākāso*).

Now we will treat each of these phrases in turn.

1. “With the complete surmounting of perceptions of matter” (*sabbaso rupasaññānaṃ samatikkamā*)

The phrase “perceptions of matter”, according to the commentaries, means both the fine-material *jhānas* and their objects, the *kasiṇas*. The Vibhaṅga explains “perceptions of matter” as

> … the perception, perceiving, perceivedness, in one who has attained a fine-material-sphere attainment or in one who has been reborn there or in one who is abiding in bliss there in this present life.[2]

Thus the Vibhaṅga identifies the term with the *jhānas*. But the commentary holds that the object should also be understood to be included, since the attainment of the first immaterial *jhāna* requires that the subtle material form of the *kasiṇas* be relinquished.[3] We saw that in developing the fine-material *jhānas* the meditator began with a coarse physical object, shifted his focus to the subtle form of the counter-part sign, and ascended from the first to the fourth *jhāna* by abandoning various mental factors while retaining the same object. But now he must give up, not only the perceptions of material form belonging to the four *jhānas*, but also the object of these perceptions – the fine material form of the counterpart sign – since it is impossible to attain the base of boundless space without overcoming all perceptions of material form.

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[1] PP., p. 356. “Sabbaso rūpasaññānaṃ samatikkamā paṭighasaññānaṃ atthagamā nānatta saññānaṃ amanasikārā ananto ākāsoti ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati.” DN. 1:183.

[2] PP., p. 357. “Rūpāvacarasamāpattiṃ samāpannassa vā upapannassa vā diṭṭhadhammasukhavihārissa vā saññā sañjānanā sañjānitattaṃ.” Vibh., p. 272.

[3] PP., pp. 357-58. Vism., p. 273.

2. “With the disappearance of perceptions of resistance” (*paṭighasaññānaṃ atthagamā*)

The word *paṭigha*, which we translate here as “resistance,” generally signifies aversion, repugnance, or anger. Here, however, it is used to mean sensory impact, the striking (*gha* = *han*) against one another (*paṭi*) of the sense organs and their respective sense objects. Perceptions of resistance are thus sensory perceptions. As it is said in the Vibhaṅga:

> Here, what are perceptions of resistance? Perceptions of visible objects, perceptions of sounds, perceptions of odours, perceptions of flavours, perceptions of tangible objects – these are called ‘perceptions of resistance’.[1]

The commentaries elucidate this as the non-occurrence of any of the ten types of sense consciousness, five the result of wholesome *kamma* and five the result of unwholesome *kamma*:

> … with the complete disappearance, the abandoning, the non-arising, of these ten kinds of perceptions of resistance, that is to say, of the five profitable-resultant and five unprofitable-resultant; causing their non-occurrence, is what is meant.[2]

It should be noted that only perception through the five physical senses is excluded from the base of boundless space. No mention is made of the disappearance of *dhamma-saññā*, perception of mental objects, for the reason that this type of perception remains. Although sensory perceptions are also absent in the four *jhānas*, their disappearance is accentuated here to emphasize the fading away of attachment to material form and to arouse a greater interest in the formless *jhānas*.[3]

3. “With non-attention to perceptions of variety” (*nānattasaññānaṃ amanasikārā*)

According to the Vibhaṅga, perceptions of variety are “the perception, perceiving, perceivedness, in one who has not attained and possesses either mind-element or mind-consciousness element.”[4] (Wr. tr.). Perceptions of variety are thus the non-sensory perceptions in the states of consciousness of those who are not absorbed in a meditative attainment. The phrase “possesses either mind-element or mind-consciousness element” excludes the bare sense perceptions, the elimination of which is already covered by “perceptions of resistance.” When the text lays down non-attention to perceptions of variety as a condition for reaching the base of boundless space, this means that the yogin must not advert to these perceptions having various diversified objects, since to attend to them or review them is obstructive to attaining the immaterial *jhānas*.[1]

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[1] PP., p. 358. “Tattha katamā paṭighasaññā? Rūpasaññā, saddasaññā, gandhasaññā, rasasaññā, phoṭṭabbasaññā. Imā vuccanti paṭighasaññāyo.” Vibh., p. 272.

[2] PP., p. 358. “Tāsaṃ kusalavipākānaṃ pañcannaṃ, akusalavipākānaṃ pañcannaṃ ti sabbaso dasannaṃ pi paṭighasaññānaṃ atthangamā pahānā asamuppādā; appavattiṃ katvāti vuttaṃ hoti.” Vism., p. 274.

[3] PP., p. 358. Vism., p. 274.

[4] “Asamāpannassa manodhātu samaṅgissa vā mano viññāṇadhātu samaṅgissa vā saññā, sañjānanā, sanjānitattaṃ.” Vibh., p. 272.

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the phrase "with the surmounting of perceptions of matter" signifies the abandonment of all fine material-sphere states, and the other two phrases the abandonment of and non-attention to all sense-sphere consciousness and its concomitants.[2]

4. "Unbounded space' (*ananto ākāso*)

The "unbounded space" which the meditator becomes aware of is the space left by the removal of the *kasiṇa* after the latter has been extended boundlessly. The space is called "unbounded" or "endless" (*ananta*) because neither a beginning boundary nor a terminal boundary can be perceived for it. The meditator "enters upon and dwells in the base of boundless space" in the sense that after reaching that attainment he abides in the *jhāna* which has the base of boundless space as its object.

The Second Āruppa: The Base of Boundless Consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*)

To attain the second immaterial *jhāna* the yogin must gain mastery over the base consisting of boundless space; then he must discern its defects. The first immaterial state is defective, firstly, because it is still close to the fine material *jhānas*, and secondly, because it is not as peaceful as the base consisting of boundless consciousness. By reflecting on these defects he develops indifference to the attainment and turns his attention to the base of boundless consciousness.

To develop the second *āruppa* the meditator focuses upon the consciousness that occurred pervading the boundless space of the first *āruppa*.[3] In other words, the second *āruppa* has as its object the consciousness pertaining to the first *āruppa*. Since the object of the first *āruppa*, space, was boundless, the consciousness of this object also contained an aspect of boundlessness, and it is to this boundless consciousness that the aspirant for the second *āruppa* should advert. He is not to attend to it merely as boundless, but as "boundless consciousness" or simply as "consciousness." As he does so the hindrances are suppressed and the mind enters access concentration. He continues to cultivate this sign again and again, until the consciousness belonging to the base of boundless consciousness arises in absorption. The cognitive series should be understood as in the previous attainment, with the appropriate changes made to fit the case.

The formula for the attainment of the base consisting of boundless consciousness reads thus: "By completely surmounting the base consisting of boundless space, [aware of] 'unbounded consciousness', he enters upon and dwells in the base consisting of boundless conciousness".[4] According to the word-commentary on this passage, the phrase “base consisting of boundless space” signifies both the first immaterial *jhāna* and the object of that *jhāna*. The surmounting of the base means the overcoming of both the *jhāna* and its object together, since the base of boundless consciousness is to be entered and dwelt in by passing beyond both aspects of the base of boundless space.

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[1] PP., p. 359. Vism., p. 274.

[2] PP., p. 359. Vism., p. 275.

[3] PP., p. 360. Vism., p. 275.

[4] PP., p. 361. "Sabbaso ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ samatikkamā, anantaṃ viññāṇaṃ ti viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati." Vism., p. 254.

To be aware of “unbounded consciousness” is to give attention to the consciousness that occurred pervading the space left by the removal of the *kasiṇa*. Thus the object of this *jhāna* is the consciousness that had pervaded boundless space in the previous *jhāna*. As it is said in the Vibhaṅga: “He gives attention to that same space pervaded by consciousness, he pervades boundlessly, hence ‘Unbounded consciousness’ is said.”[1] And the commentator adds: “What is meant by ‘He pervades boundlessly’ is that ‘he gives attention to that same consciousness which had pervaded that space’.”[2] The boundless consciousness which pervaded boundless space is itself the base consisting in boundless consciousness, and the *jhāna* as well, because it is founded upon this base, derivatively comes to be called by the same name.

The Third Āruppa: *The Base of Nothingness* (ākiñcaññāyatana)

To attain the next *āruppa*, the base of nothingness, the meditator who has mastered the base of boundless consciousness in the five ways must perceive this attainment as defective due to its proximity to the base of boundless space and its grossness compared to the next higher *jhāna*. By recognizing these dangers the meditator removes his attachment to the base of boundless consciousness; then he should advert to the base of nothingness as more peaceful. The way to concentrate on the base consisting of nothingness is to

> give attention to the [present] non-existence, voidness, secluded aspect of that same [past] consciousness belonging to the base consisting of boundless space which became the object of [the consciousness belonging to] the base consisting of boundless consciousness.[3]

In other words, to attain the base of nothingness the yogin has to focus upon the present absence or non-existence of the consciousness belonging to the base consisting of boundless space. He is advised to advert to it over and over, thinking to himself “There is not, there is not” or “void, void,” etc. When his practice matures there arises in absorption consciousness belonging to the base of nothingness, making the non-existence of the consciousness of boundless space its object.

Though both the base of boundless consciousness and base of nothingness are concerned objectively with the consciousness of the base of boundless space, they relate to it in opposite ways. The second *āruppa* objectifies it positively: it focusses upon the consciousness of boundless space as present and seeks to appropriate its boundlessness for itself. The third *āruppa*, in contrast, relates to the consciousness of the base of boundless space negatively. It excludes this consciousness from awareness, making the absence or non-existence of this consciousness its object. As the *Visuddhimagga* explains:

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[1] PP., p. 361. “Anantaṃ viññāṇanti taṃyeva ākāsaṃ viññāṇena phutaṃ manasikaroti anantaṃ pharati. Tena vuccati anantaṃ viññāṇanti.” Vibh., p. 273.

[2] PP., p. 362. “Anantaṃ pharati, taṃ yeva ākāsaṃ phuṭaṃ viññāṇaṃ manasikarotī ti vuttaṃ hoti.” Vism., p. 276.

[3] PP., p. 362. “Tass’eva viññāṇañcāyatanārammaṇabhūtassa ākāsānañcāyatanaviññāṇassa abhāvo, suññatā, vivittākāro manasikātabbo.” Vism., p. 277.

> Suppose a man sees a community of bhikkhus gathered together in a meeting hall or some such place and then goes elsewhere; then after the bhikkhus have risen at the conclusion of the business for which they had met and have departed, the man comes back, and as he stands in the doorway looking at that place again, he sees it only as void, he sees it only as secluded, he does not think 'so many bhikkhus have died, so many have left the district', but rather he sees only the nonexistence thus, 'this is void, secluded' – so too, having formerly dwelt seeing with the *jhāna* eye belonging to the base consisting of boundless consciousness the [earlier] consciousness that had occurred making the space its object, [now] when that consciousness has disappeared owing to his giving attention to the preliminary work in the way beginning 'there is not, there is not', he dwells seeing only its non-existence, in other words its departedness when this consciousness has arisen in absorption.[1]

The texts describe the attainment of the third *āruppa* with a standard formula: "By completely surmounting the base consisting of boundless consciousness, [aware that] 'There is nothing', he enters upon and dwells in the base consisting of nothingness."[2] According to the commentary on this formula, the "base of boundless consciousness" which must be surmounted is both the second immaterial *jhāna* and its object together, since the third immaterial *jhāna* must be reached by passing beyond the second and by relinquishing attachment to its object.[3] The phrase "there is nothing" is explained in the Vibhaṅga thus: "'There is nothing': he makes that same consciousness non-existent, makes it absent, makes it disappear, sees that 'there is nothing', hence 'There is nothing' is said."[4] To make "that same consciousness," i.e., the consciousness belonging to the base of boundless space, nonexistent means not to advert to it or attend to it, but to attend only to its non-existence or absence. By so doing, the yogin "enters and dwells in the base consisting of nothingness." The base consisting of nothingness, which is the

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1. PP., p. 363. ''Yathā nāma puriso maṇḍalamālādīsu kenacid eva karaṇīyena sannipatitaṃ bhikkhusanghaṃ disvā katthaci gantvā sannipātakiccāvasāne uṭṭhāya pakkantesu bhikkhūsu āgantvā dvāre ṭhatvā puna taṃ ṭhānaṃ olokento suññaṃ eva passati, vivittaṃ eva passati, nāssa evaṃ hoti, ettakā nāma bhikkhū kālaṃkatā vā, disāpakkantā vā ti, atha kho, suññaṃ idaṃ vivittaṅ ti natthibhāvaṃ eva passati, evaṃ eva pubbe ākāse pavattitaviññāṇaṃ viññāṇañcāyatanajjānacakkhunā passanto viharitvā, n'atthi n'atthī ti ādinā parikammamanasikārena antarahite tasmiṃ viññāṇe tassa apagamanasankhātaṃ abhāvaṃ eva passanto viharati." Vism., p. 277.

2. PP., p. 363. "Sabbaso viññānañcāyatanaṃ samatikkamma, n'atthi kiñci ti ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati ti." Vibh., p. 254.

3. PP., pp. 363-64. Vism., p. 278.

4. PP., p. 364. Vism., p. 272.

foundation for the third formless *jhāna*, is "a term for the disappearance of the consciousness belonging to the base consisting of boundless space."[1]

The Fourth Āruppa: *The Base of Neither Perception nor Non-perception* (nevasaññā nāsaññāyatana)

If the yogin wants to go further and reach the fourth and highest *āruppa* attainment, he must first achieve fivefold mastery over the base of nothingness. Then he should contemplate the danger in that attainment, consisting in its proximity to the lower attainments. He should reflect upon the base of neither perception nor non-perception as superior and more peaceful. He can also reflect upon the unsatisfactoriness of perception, thinking: "perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart… this is peaceful, this is sublime, that is to say, neither perception nor non-perception."[2] In this way he ends his attachment to the base of nothingness and arouses a desire to attain the base of neither perception nor non-perception.

The base of neither perception nor non-perception has as its object the four mental aggregates that constitute the attainment of the base of nothingness – that is, the aggregates of feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Just as the second *āruppa* took as its object the consciousness belonging to the first *āruppa*, so the fourth *āruppa* takes as its object the consciousness and associated states belonging to the third *āruppa*. Focussing on the four mental aggregates of the base of nothingness, the meditator adverts to the base as "peaceful, peaceful," reviewing it and striking at it with applied and sustained thought. As he does so the hindrances are suppressed, the mind enters access concentration, and then passes into absorption pertaining to the base of neither perception nor non-perception. The process of attainment is described in the canon thus: "By completely surmounting the base consisting of nothingness he enters and dwells in the base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception."[3]

Though the yogin, as the formula points out, attains the base of neither perception nor non-perception by passing beyond the base of nothingness, it still should be borne in mind that this fourth attainment has the third as its object. The yogin reached the fourth *āruppa* by focussing upon the base of nothingness as "peaceful, peaceful." In the Vibhaṅga it is said that the meditator who reaches the level that is neither percipient nor non-percipient "gives attention to that same base consisting of nothingness as peaceful."[4]

At this point the question may arise as to how the meditator can overcome the base of nothingness if he attends to it as peaceful. The *Visuddhimagga* answers that although the meditator gives attention to the third *āruppa* as peaceful, he has no desire to attain it, since he has reflected upon the base of neither perception nor non-perception as more peaceful and superior. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with the example of a king who might see craftsmen at work while he is proceeding along a city street with the pomp of royalty. Though he might admire their skill and accomplishment in their crafts, the king would not want to become a craftsman himself, since he is aware of the superior benefits of kingship. Similarly,

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[1] PP., p. 364. Vism., p. 278.

[2] PP., p. 265. "Saññā rogo, saññā gaṇḍo, saññā sallaṃ… etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ panītaṃ yadidaṃ nevasaññā-nāsaññā ti." MN. 2:231.

[3] PP., p. 365. "Sabbaso ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamma nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharatī ti." Vibh., p. 254.

[4] PP., p. 366. "Taṃ yeva ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ santato manasikaroti. Vibh., p. 274.

> Though this [meditator] gives attention to that attainment as 'peaceful', yet there is no concern in him or reaction or attention such as 'I shall advert to this attainment' or 'I shall attain this' or 'I shall resolve upon [the duration of] it', or 'I shall emerge from it' or 'I shall review it'."[1]

The commentaries such as the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* and the *Visuddhimagga* go to great length to explain the meaning of the term "neither perception nor non-perception," which suggests the abstruse nature of this *jhāna*. The *jhāna* receives this name because on the one hand it lacks gross perception and on the other retains a subtle perception. Lacking gross perception, it cannot perform the decisive function of perception, i.e., the clear discernment of objects, and thus cannot be called "having perception" (*neva saññā*). But yet this attainment retains an extremely subtle perception as a residual formation, and thus cannot be called "without perception" (*nāsaññā*). To make plain this ambivalent character of the *jhāna* it is named "the base of neither perception nor non-perception." Perception is not the only mental factor that persists in this attainment in residual form; all the other mental factors such as feeling, consciousness, contact, and the rest also continue reduced to the finest subtlety. Thus this *jhāna* is also named "the attainment with residual formations" (*saṅkhārāvasesā samāpatti*). [2]

The commentaries illustrate the method of naming this attainment by means of the following anecdote. A novice smeared a bowl with oil and an elder monk asked him to bring the bowl to serve gruel. The novice replied, "Venerable sir, there is oil in the bowl." Then the monk told him, "Bring the oil, novice, I shall fill the oil tube." Thereupon the novice said: "There is no oil, Venerable sir."[3] In this tale what the novice said is true in both cases: there is no oil since there is not enough to fill the tube yet there is no utter absence of oil since some remains at the base of the bowl. Similarly, in this attainment perception cannot be said to be fully present since it is so subtle that it cannot perform the decisive function of perceiving an object; yet it cannot be said to be absent since it remains in residual form.

With this fourth formless *jhāna* the mind has reached the highest possible level of development in the direction of serenity (*samathabhāvanā*). Consciousness has attained to the most intense degree of concentration, becoming so subtle and so refined that it can no longer be described in terms of existence or non-existence. Yet even this

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1. PP., p. 366. Vism., p. 280.

2. PP., p. 367. Vism., p. 280.

3. PP., pp. 367-68. Vism., p. 281.

attainment, as we will see, is still a mundane state which, from the Buddhist perspective, must finally give way to insight that alone leads to true liberation.

General Remarks on the Āruppas

Although the immaterial *jhānas*, unlike the fine material *jhānas*, are not given numerical names, they do follow a fixed sequence and must be attained in the order in which they are presented. That is, the yogin who wishes to achieve the immaterial *jhānas* must begin with the base of boundless space and then proceed step by step up to the base of neither perception nor non-perception. In this respect the accomplishment of the formless attainments corresponds to that of the lower four *jhānas*. However, an important difference separates the modes of progress in the two cases. In the case of the fine material *jhānas*, the ascent from one *jhāna* to another involves a surmounting of *jhāna* factors. To rise from the first *jhāna* to the second the yogin must eliminate applied thought and sustained thought, to rise from the second to the third he must overcome rapture, and to rise from the third to the fourth he must replace pleasant with neutral feeling. Thus progress involves a reduction and refinement of the *jhāna* factors, from the initial five to the culmination in mental one-pointedness and neutral feeling.

Once the fourth *jhāna* is reached the *jhāna* factors remain constant. In the higher ascent to the immaterial attainments there is no further elimination of *jhāna* factors. For this reason the formless *jhānas*, when classified from the perspective of their factorial constitution as is done in the Abhidhamma, are considered as modalities of the fourth *jhāna*. Thus the Dhammasaṅgaṇi presents the formula for the first immaterial attainment as follows:

> When the path to rebirth in the immaterial realm is cultivated, then with the entire surpassing of perceptions of material form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, by paying no attention to perceptions of variety, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and dwells in the fourth *jhāna* which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity and is associated with equanimity, associated with the perception of boundless space.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Similarly, the formulas for each of the other three immaterial attainments are conjoined with the formula for the fourth. All these *āruppas* are two-factored *jhānas*, constituted by mental one-pointedness and equanimous feeling.

Rather than being determined by a surmounting of factors, the order of the *āruppas* is determined by a surmounting of objects. Whereas for the lower *jhānas* the object can remain constant but the factors must be changed, for the immaterial *jhānas* the factors remain constant while the objects change. As we saw, the base of boundless space eliminates the *kasiṇa* object of the fourth *jhāna*, the base of boundless consciousness surmounts the object of the base of boundless space, the base of nothingness surmounts the object of the base of boundless consciousness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception surmounts the object of the base of nothingness.

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[1] "Yasmiṃ samaye arūpūpapattiyā maggaṃ bhāveti sabbaso rūpasaññānaṃ samatikkamā paṭighasaññānaṃ atthaṇgamānānattasaññānaṃ amanasikārā ākāsānañcāyatanasaññāsahagataṃ sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassa domanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā upekkhā satipārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati upekkhāsahagataṃ." Dhs., p. 68.

Because the objects become progressively more subtle at each level the *jhāna* factors of equanimous feeling and one-pointedness, while remaining constant in nature throughout, become correspondingly more refined in quality. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with two similes. The first compares the four formless *jhānas* to the floors of a four-storied palace with progressively finer objects of sense pleasure on each floor. There is no difference between the floors in regard to their nature as palace-floors, but only in regard to the objects of enjoyment found on them. The second simile compares the four formless *jhānas* to four pieces of cloth of the same measurements, yet made of thick, thin, thinner, and very thin thread respectively, all spun by the same person. Though there is no difference in their nature as pieces of cloth or in their measurements, yet they differ in their softness to the touch, fineness, and costliness. Similarly,

> although there are only the two factors in all four [immaterial states], that is to say, equanimity and unification of mind, still each one should be understood as finer than the one before with the progressive refinement of the factors due to successful development.[1]

Whereas the four lower *jhānas* can each take a variety of objects – the ten *kasiṇas*, the in-and-out breath, etc. – and do not stand in any integral relation to these objects, the four immaterial *jhānas* each take a single object which is so intimately related to the attainments that they interconnect in a closely knit manner. As we pointed out, the second *āruppa* takes as its object the consciousness pertaining to the first *āruppa*, the third the non-existence or disappearance of this same consciousness, and the fourth the four mental aggregates making up the third *āruppa*. Buddhaghosa illustrates this relation of successive dependence with another one of his picturesque analogies. A man arrived at a dirty place where a tent was set up, and being disgusted with the dirt, he hung on to the tent. Another man came along and leant upon the man hanging on to the tent. A third arrived, and thinking both were insecure, stood outside the tent. A fourth came, found the third man more securely placed, and leant upon him. The commentator connects the similes with the four *āruppas* thus:

> The space from which the *kasiṇa* has been removed is like the tent in the dirty place. The [consciousness of the] base consisting of boundless space, which makes space its object owing to disgust with the sign of the fine-material, is like the man who hangs on to the tent owing to disgust with the dirt. The [consciousness of the] base consisting of boundless consciousness, the occurrence of which is contingent upon [the consciousness of] the base consisting of boundless space whose object is space, is like the man who leans upon the man who hangs on to the tent. The [consciousness of the] base consisting of nothingness, which instead of making the [consciousness of the]

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[1] PP., pp. 369-70. Vism., p. 282.

> base consisting of boundless space its object has the non-existence of that as its object, is like the man who, after considering the insecurity of those two does not lean upon the one hanging on to the tent, but stands outside. The (consciousness of the] base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception, the occurrence of which is contingent upon [the consciousness of] the base consisting of nothingness, which stands in a place outside, in other words, in the non-existence of [the past] consciousness, is like the man who stands leaning upon the last-named, having considered the insecurity of the one hanging on to the tent and the one leaning upon him, and fancying that the one standing outside is well placed.[1]

Although the yogin who aspires to reach the base of neither perception nor-non-perception has seen the flaws in the base of nothingness, it is necessary for him to take this base as his object since there is no other object sufficiently subtle to serve as a foundation for reaching the highest formless attainment. This is similar to the case of men who remain loyal to a despotic king because they depend on him for their livelihood.[2] Thus it is evident that all eight attainments represent a gradual development, each succeeding one depending on its predecessor.

Although these four immaterial *jhānas* are separately described in the suttas they are not mentioned as often as the four fine material *jhānas*. The reason for this omission can be understood to be their implicit inclusion in the fourth *jhāna*. This inclusion is made because of their similarity of factors. Therefore, in places where the practices beyond the *jhānas* are discussed, the fourth *jhāna* alone is mentioned as their prerequisite since the *āruppas* are understood to be incorporated within it.

The Modes of Direct Knowledge

In the suttas the meditator who has attained and mastered the fourth *jhāna* is sometimes shown as proceeding to attain certain kinds of supernormal knowledge. In a stock passage it is said that when, after emerging from the fourth *jhāna*, the meditator's concentrated mind is "thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, and has become malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability,"[3] he directs it to the achievement of various powers of higher knowledge. These modes of higher knowledge are presented in different sets of varying number in the texts. Some suttas mention three, called the "threefold knowledge" (*tevijjā*). These are: [1] the knowledge of recollecting previous lives (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*); [2] the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapātañāṇa*); and [3] the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*).[4] Some suttas mention five kinds of direct knowledge

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[1] PP., pp. 370-71. Vism., p. 283.

[2] PP., p. 371. Vism., p. 283.

[3] PP., p. 409. "So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anangane vigatūpakkilese, mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite āneñjappatte…" DN. 1:76.

[4] AN. 1:163-65.

(*pañcābhiññā*): [1] the knowledge of the modes of supernormal power (*iddhividhañāṇa*); [2] the divine ear-element (*dibbasotadhātuñāṇa*); [3] the knowledge of others' minds (*cetopariyañāṇa*); [4] the knowledge of recollecting previous lives; [5] the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings.[1] Other suttas expand this list to six (*chaḷabhiññā*) by adding the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers.[2] In this case the first five are called mundane modes of direct knowledge (*lokiya abhiññā*), the sixth the supramundane direct knowledge (*lokuttara abhiññā*). Still other suttas present a set of eight modes of higher knowledge. This set, which does not have a special name, consists of the above six *abhiññās* augmented by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*) and the knowledge of the mind-created body (*manomayiddhiñāṇa*).[3] We will discuss these modes of higher knowledge in turn, taking the six *abhiññās* as the basis for our account and then adding explanations of the others. But first a few remarks are called for on the preliminaries for the modes of direct knowledge.

The Prerequisites for Direct Knowledge

In order to develop the five mundane *abhiññās*, as well as the knowledge of the mind-created body, it is necessary to have gained proficiency in the eight meditative attainments (*aṭṭhasamāpattiyo*) comprising the four fine material *jhānas* and the four immaterial *jhānas*. Although the suttas often show the exercise of the *abhiññās* taking place immediately after the fourth *jhāna*, without mentioning the formless attainments, the commentaries state that the latter also have to be understood as their prerequisites. The reason they are not mentioned is that they are implicitly included by the fourth *jhāna*, which alone serves as the immediate basis for the exercise of the *abhiññās*.

Thus the commentary to the Dīgha Nikāya states:

> There is no achievement of the higher kinds of direct knowledge without accomplishing mastery over the eight meditative attainments in the fourteen ways [to be explained]. In the texts only the fine material *jhānas* are given; however the immaterial *jhānas* should be included and explained.[4] (Wr. tr.).

The subcommentary to this passage elaborates the point further:

> When it is said that this method (of attaining direct knowledge) does not succeed without the immaterial attainments, their indispensability should be understood. If so, then why aren't the immaterial *jhānas* mentioned in the text? Specifically, since the fourth fine-material *jhāna* is the basis for all the *abhiññās*, they are taught by being included within that (*jhāna*). It is not that

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[1] SN. 2:216.

[2] DN. 3:281.

[3] *Ibid.* 1:76-77.

[4] "Ettāvatā cesa rūpajjhānalābhiyo na arūpajjhānalābhiti na veditabbo. Na hi aṭṭhasu samāpattīsu cuddasahākārehi ciṇṇavasibhāvaṃ vinā upari abhiññādhigamo hoti. Pāliyaṃ pana rūpajjhānāniyeva āgatāni. Arūpajjhānāni āharitvā kathetabbāni." DN.A. 1:196.

> the immaterial *jhānas* are not instrumental here. Hence (the commentary) says: ‘the immaterial *jhānas* should be included and explained’.[1] (Wr. tr.).

The *Sāratthadīpanī*, a Vinaya subcommentary, states the same point more succinctly: “‘Four *jhānas*’ is said because the four imaterial *jhānas* attained by the elimination of desire for the fine material *jhānas* are included in the fourth *jhāna*.”[2] (Wr. tr.).

All this means that mastery of the four fine material *jhānas*, without mastering the *āruppas*, is not sufficient for achieving the mundane *abhiññās*. To attain the mundane kinds of direct knowledge the formless *jhānas* also must be mastered, and therefore when the fourth *jhāna* is shown as preceding the *abhiññās* the prior acquisition of the *āruppas* should be understood. It should be mentioned, however, that the mundane *jhānas* and the exercises based on them are not requirements for the sixth, supramundane *abhiññā*. This latter is the outcome of wisdom rather than of absorption, as we will see below.

For the meditator to achieve the *abhiññās* he should accomplish the eight attainments in each of the eight *kasiṇas*, the four elemental *kasiṇas* (earth, water, fire, and air) and the four color *kasiṇas* (blue, yellow, red, and white). Then he should acquire complete control of his mind in the following fourteen ways:[3]

[1] The meditator must attain *jhāna* in the eight *kasiṇas* in the direct order given in the texts (*kasiṇānuloma*), i.e., from the earth *kasiṇa* through to the white *kasiṇa*, doing so even up to a thousand times in each one until he is fully adept at it. [2] Having mastered the direct order, the yogin should attain *jhāna* in the *kasiṇas* in reverse order (*kasiṇāpaṭiloma*), moving from the white *kasiṇa* back to the earth *kasiṇa*. [3] He should next attain *jhāna* again and again in forward and reverse order (*kasiṇānulomapaṭiloma*) from the earth *kasiṇa* to the white *kasiṇa* and then back again.

[4] The yogin should attain each of the attainments in direct order from the first *jhāna* up to the base of neither perception nor non-perception (*jhānānuloma*). [5] Then he should master the *jhānas* in reverse order (*jhānāpaṭiloma*), from the eight down to the first. And next [6] he moves through the *jhānas* in both direct and reverse order (*jhānānulomapaṭiloma*).

[7] The meditator should skip alternate *jhānas* (*jhānukkantika*) while retaining the same *kasiṇa*. That is, with the earth *kasiṇa* as object, he should attain the first *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, the base of boundless space, and the base of nothingness, then repeat the same for the water *kasiṇa*, etc. [8] Then he should skip alternate *kasiṇas* (*kasiṇukkantika*) without

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[1] “Svāyaṃ nayo arūpasamāpattīhi vinā na ijjhatīti tāyapettha avinābhāvo veditabbo. Yadi evaṃ kasmā pāliyaṃ na arūpajjhānāni āgatāni? Visesato ca rūpāvacaracatutthajjhānapādakattā sabbābhiññānaṃ tadantogadhā katvā tayā desitā; na arūpāvacarajjhānaṃ idha anupayogato; tenāha: ‘Arūpajjhānaṃ āharitvā kathetabbāni Ñāṇābhivaṃsa, [*Dīgha Nikāya Abhinava Ṭīkā*] *Sādhuvilāsinī Nāma Sīlakkhandhavagga Abhinavaṭīkā*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 2 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1961), 2:142.

[2] “Rūpa virāga bhāvanā vasena pavattaṃ catubbhidhampi arūpajjhānaṃ catutthajjhānasaṅgahamevāti āha ‘cattāri jhānāniti’” Sāriputta Thera, [*Samantapāsādikā Vinayaṭṭhakathā Ṭīkā*] *Sāratthadīpanīṭīkā*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 3 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1960), 1:380.

[3] PP., pp. 410-11. Vism., pp. 314-15.

skipping *jhānas*; he attains the first *jhāna* in the earth, fire, blue, and red *kasiṇas*, then repeats the same for each of the other *jhānas*. [9] The meditator next proceeds to skipping *jhānas* and *kasiṇas* together (*jhānakasiṇukkantika*). He should attain the first *jhāna* in the earth *kasiṇa*, the third in the fire *kasiṇa*, the base of boundless space by removing the blue *kasiṇa*, and the base of nothingness arrived at through the red *kasiṇa*.

[l0] The next stage, called "transposition of factors", (*aṅgasaṅkantika*) involves attaining the first *jhāna* up to the fourth *āruppa* all in the same *kasiṇa*. [11] He then attains the first *jhāna* in each of the *kasiṇas* from the earth *kasiṇa* through the white *kasiṇa*. This is called "transposition of objects" (*ārammaṇasankantika*). [12] The combined "transposition of factors and objects" (*aṅgārammaṇasankantika*) involves changing the *jhānas* and objects in matched correspondence to each other, that is, attaining the first *jhāna* in the earth *kasiṇa*, the second in the water *kasiṇa*, the third in the fire *kasiṇa*, and so forth up to the base of neither perception nor non-perception arrived at from the white *kasiṇa*.

[13] The "definition of factors" (*aṅgavavatthāpana*) means defining each of the *jhānas* from the first to the eighth by way of its constituent factors, the first as five-factored, the second as three-factored, etc. [14] The definition of object (*ārammaṇavavatthāpana*) means defining only the object, as "This is the earth *kasina*", etc., up to "This is the white *kasiṇa*."

After mastering these fourteen modes the meditator should develop the four bases of accomplishment, that is zeal (*chanda*), consciousness (*citta*), energy (*viriya*), and inquiry (*vīmaṃsā*).[1] He should cultivate these intensively in order to attain the desired type of direct knowledge. Having fulfilled all the preliminary conditions, the meditator must direct his mind to the kind of supernormal knowledge he wishes to attain. The *abhiññās* do not come as automatic by-products of *jhāna* but require a prior resolution and determinate effort on the part of the yogin. As the Buddha says, when the meditator's mind is concentrated and purified "he directs, he inclines his mind to the kinds of supernormal power."[2]

The Six Abhiññās

1. Knowledge of the modes of supernormal power (iddhividhañāṇa)

The Pāli word *iddhi*, which we translate as "supernormal power", comes from the Sanskrit root *ṛddh*, which means to prosper or to succeed. *Iddhi* thus means, literally, prosperity, success, or accomplishment, but the main sense suggested by the word is an ability to perform feats which go against the normal course of natural events. For this reason the *iddhis* have sometimes been interpreted as supernatural or miraculous powers. However, from the Buddhist standpoint these powers do not derive from any divine or supernatural source but from a psychic potency based upon a superior understanding of the inner dynamics of nature. Thus they operate completely within the framework of the law of cause and effect and the "miracles" for which they are responsible remain entirely natural.

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[1] PP., pp. 421-22. Vism., p. 324.

[2] PP., p. 414. "Iddhividhāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhinnāmeti." DN. 1:77-78.

The kinds of supernormal power exercised by a meditator are described in the texts in the following stock passage;

> When his concentrated mind is thus purified… and attained to imperturbability, he directs, he inclines his mind to the kinds of supernormal power. He wields the various kinds of supernormal power. Having been one, he becomes many; having been many, he becomes one. He appears and vanishes. He goes unhindered through walls, through enclosures, through mountains, as though in open space. He dives in and out of the earth as though in water. He goes on unbroken water as though on earth. Seated cross-legged he travels in space like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes the moon and sun so mighty and powerful. He wields bodily mastery even as far as the Brahmā world.[1]

In this passage eight supernormal powers are expounded. We will examine them briefly one by one.

[1] The first supernormal power is becoming many after having been one or becoming one after having been many (*eko pi hutvā bahudhā hoti*, *bahudhā pi hutvā eko hoti*). This means the ability to create many appearances or forms of oneself and then to dissolve those many forms and return to the condition of having a single body. To exercise this power the meditator should enter the fourth *jhāna* as a basis for direct knowledge and emerge from it. Then he must resolve on the number of forms of himself he wishes to create. He again attains the fourth *jhāna*, emerges, and resolves. Simultaneously with the resolving consciousness he becomes the number of forms he decided upon – a hundred, a thousand, etc., as he wishes, (presumably in most cases the ability to create an increasing number of forms must be gradually acquired). Unless a specific determination is made otherwise, the many created forms will appear just like the original and perform the same actions he performs. But if the yogin makes a prior resolution, he can display his many forms with different appearances and cause them to perform different actions. To become one again he should repeat the original procedure, resolving to become one. But if he originally resolved to appear as many for a limited time, the many forms will disappear automatically when the time lapses.[2]

[2] The second power is causing appearance and disappearance (*āvībhāvatirobhāvaṃ*). "Causing appearance" means making a dark area appear light, making what is hidden become visible, or making oneself or others become visible even when at a distance. "Causing disappearance" means making a bright area appear dark, making what is manifest become invisible, or making oneself or others become invisible even when within range of sight. The procedure is the same as in the case of the previous power except that the resolution is changed.

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[1] PP., pp. 409, 420. Vism., pp. 315, 323. DN. 1:77.

[2] PP., pp. 420-27. Vism., pp. 323-28.

[3] To exercise the power of going through walls, enclosures, and mountains as though through space (*tiro-kuḍḍaṃ tiro-pākāraṃ tiro-pabbataṃ*) the yogin should attain the fourth *jhāna* in the space *kasiṇa*. Then he does the preliminary work by adverting to the wall, enclosure or mountain, etc. and resolving upon it as space. As a result of his resolution it becomes space and he passes through it unhindered.

[4] In order to acquire the ability to dive in and out of the ground as if it were water (*paṭhaviyā pi ummujja nimmujjaṃ karoti seyyathā pi udake*) the yogin must have obtained the water *kasiṇa* attainment. He enters into the fourth *jhāna* on the water *kasiṇa* and emerges. Then he adverts to a portion of ground and resolves upon it thus "Let there be water." The earth becomes water and he can dive in it, bathe in it, drink it, etc. If he resolves only this much the earth becomes water for him alone, but if he makes a determination it can become water for others as well.

[5] The yogin who wishes to walk on water without sinking as though it were earth (*udake pi abhijjamāno gacchati seyyathā pi paṭha-viyaṃ*) should be skilled in the earth *kasiṇa*. He enters the fourth *jhāna* on the earth *kasiṇa*, emerges, and resolves "Let the water become earth." He repeats the procedure, and with the resolution the water in the determined area becomes earth. Then he can walk on it without falling in.

[6] To travel through space like a bird (*ākāse pi pallaṅkena kamati seyyathā pi pakkhī sakuṇo*), the yogin obtains the earth *kasiṇa* and emerges. He determines upon space as being earth, thinking "Let there be earth." For him space becomes solid like the earth, and he can walk, stand, sit, or lie down there just as men normally can do on the ground.

[7] The next power, touching and stroking the sun and moon with one's hand (*ime pi candima-suriyā evaṃ mahiddhike evaṃ mahānubhāve pāṇinā parimasati parimajjati*), does not require a special kasiṇa, but is accomplished simply through the fourth *jhāna* that is made a basis for direct knowledge. The Paṭisambhidāmagga describes this power thus:

> Here he who has controlled his mind and has attained psychic powers, contemplates on the sun and moon… resolves through super knowledge: 'Let them come to the side of my hand' and they appear. Seated or lying down he handles, feels, touches, the sun and moon with his hand.[1]

The meditator, according to the *Visuddhimagga*, can either go to the sun and moon and touch them, or make them come into hand's reach by a mental resolution, doing so by enlarging his hand.[2] But though he does all this, for others the sun and moon remain the same, their radiance and movement being unaffected.

[8] The last of the powers is exercising bodily mastery as far as the Brahma-world (*yāva Brahma-lokā pi kāyena vā saṃvatteti*). Having attained the basic *jhāna*, the meditator who wants to go to the Brahma-world can resolve upon it as near and it becomes as he

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[1] BMTP., p. 436. "Idha so iddhimā ceto vasippatto… candimasuriye āvajjati āvajjitvā ñāṇena adhiṭṭhāti 'hatthapāse hotūti'. So nisinnako vā nipannako vā candimasuriye pāṇinā āmasati parāmasati parimajjati." Pts., p. 387.

[2] PP., p. 435. Vism., p. 335.

wishes. He can make the near become distant, the many become few, and the few become many. The Paṭisambhidāmagga describes some of the masteries the yogin can exercise thus:

> If he, who is possessed of psychic power, and has controlled his will wishes to go to the Brahma-world, he resolves that the distant be near, and it becomes near; he resolves that the near be distant, and it becomes distant; he resolves that the many be few, and they become few; he resolves that the few be many, and they become many. With the divine-sight he sees the Brahma's form; with the divine-hearing element he hears the Brahma's voice; with the knowledge of others' minds he knows the Brahma's mind. If he wishes to go to the Brahma-world in this visible body, he applies his *jhāna*-mind to the physical body, he resolves concerning the mind as the body; having applied the mind to the body, he enters into the thought of ease and lightness, and in his visible body he goes to the Brahma-world. If he… wishes to go to the Brahma-world in an invisible body, he applies his body to the mind, he resolves the body as the mind… he enters into the thought of ease and lightness and in an invisible body goes to the Brahma-world. In the presence of Brahma he creates a mind-formed body… He walks to and fro, the created body walks also to and fro. If he stands… sits… lies down, the created body also… lies down. If he emits vapour… flames… speaks… whatever he does, so does the created body.[1]

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, "applying the *jhāna*-mind to the physical body" and "resolving upon the mind as the body" means making the mind accord with the material body. When the yogin enters into the "thought of ease and lightness" his physical body becomes as light as a tuft of cotton, and he can go to the Brahma-world with a visible body as light as a tuft of cotton wafted by the wind. On the other hand "applying the body to the mind" and "resolving the body as the mind" mean taking the body and mounting it on the mind, so as to make its mode of going swift like that of the mind. All these practices form the preliminary exercise for reaching the Brahma-world, but do not yet constitute the "wielding of bodily mastery as far as the Brahma-world." The wielding of bodily power begins, in the above passage, with the creation of a mind-formed body in the presence of Brahma, continuing through the feats that follow this down to "whatever he does, so does the created body."[2]

Iddhi and Pāṭihāriya

The possession of *iddhi* is regarded as a desirable quality in a bhikkhu which contributes to the completeness of his spiritual perfection.[3] However, exhibiting supernormal powers to gain adherents, win offerings, or obtain popularity has been prohibited by the Buddha. In the Vinaya the display of supernormal feats or psychic powers is classified as an offense of wrong doing (*āpatti-dukkaṭa*).[1] Nevertheless, while the Buddha rebuked Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja for exhibiting his powers to obtain a sandalwood bowl, he expressed approval of Moggallāna's exercise of *iddhis*.[2] The reason for this difference is that the former made an indiscreet public exhibition of his power while the latter used his powers judiciously. The Buddha approved of the exhibition of psychic power only when it helps eliminate the defilements in peoples' minds and makes them free from obsessions.

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[1] BMTP., pp. 437-38. Pts. pp. 387-88.

[2] PP., pp. 441-43. Vism., pp. 331-32.

[3] AN. 3:280-81.

Sometimes the word *iddhi* appears in combination with another word *pāṭihāriya*, which means literally "prevention" or "warding off" but assumes the sense of "wonder" or "marvel"; the compound *iddhipāṭihāriya* thus signifies the "wonder of supernormal powers." The term appears in the suttas in a triad of *pāṭihāriyas* comprising the following items: [1] the wonder of supernormal powers (*iddhipāṭihāriya*); [2] the wonder of manifestation or thought-reading (*ādesanapāṭihāriya*); and [3] the wonder of education (*anusāsanīpāṭihāriya*).[3] The first is explained simply by the stock passage on the supernormal powers. The wonder of manifestation involves telling people what their mental states are on the basis of thought-reading, interpretation, or messages received from other beings, human or non-human.[4] The wonder of education is the ability to guide others in their spiritual development, telling them: "You should think these thoughts, you should not think those thoughts; you should attend in this way, not in that way; you should abandon this; you should enter and abide thus."[5] Those who impart this education know exactly what to urge their pupils to avoid and what to urge them to develop.

Of the three types of *pāṭihāriya*, the Buddha disapproved of the use of the first two as means of converting people to his teaching. He said that there are certain magical sciences (*vijjā*) which can enable a person to perform supernormal feats or practice thought reading and thus these wonders cannot be taken as indicators of real spiritual accomplishment.[6] The wonder to which he gave unqualified approval was the wonder of education, which alone leads to liberation from suffering.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga, elaborating this idea, states that the wonderful methods which promote renunciation, non-hatred, mental luminosity, composure of mind, determination of righteousness, wisdom, bliss, the attainment of the *jhānas*, etc., up to the path of arahatship are called the true *iddhi* as they bring real accomplishment and success. The methods that destroy sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, doubt, ignorance, clinging, the hindrances and defilements are called the real *pāṭihāriya* for the reason that they prevent one from falling back into *saṃsāra*.[7] Thus for early

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[1] Vinp. 2:112.

[2] SN. 4:269.

[3] DN. 1:212-15. Pts., pp. 401-404.

[4] Pts., p. 402.

[5] DN. 1:214-15.

[6] *Ibid.* 1:213-14.

[7] Pts., pp. 401-404.

Buddhism the practice of the noble path rather than performance of miracles constitutes the truly wonderful accomplishment.

2. The second abhiññā: the divine ear-element (dibbasotadhatu)

The divine ear-element is the ability to hear the sounds of deities as well as of human beings, and to hear sounds that are far off, even in another world system, as well as sounds that are extremely near, such as the sounds of the creatures living in one's own body.[1] The texts describe the divine ear-element as follows:

> He directs, he inclines, his mind to the divine ear-element. With the divine ear-element, which is purified and surpasses the human, he hears both kinds of sounds, the divine and the human, those that are far as well as near.[2]

Technically, the divine ear-element refers to a particular capacity for knowledge, called an "ear-element" for the reason that it exercises the function of the normal ear, namely, acting as a basis for the hearing of sounds. This element is said to be "divine" because it is similar to the ear-element of the deities, which is liberated from imperfections and capable of receiving far-off sounds.[3]

To obtain the divine ear-element the meditator should attain the basic *jhāna* for direct-knowledge and then emerge from it. Keeping his mind at the level of preliminary-work concentration, he should advert first to gross sounds within the normal range of hearing, then gradually to more and more subtle sounds until he can hear the faintest sounds that can only be heard with the most careful attention. He should concentrate on each of the ten directions, attending to the precise "signs" or qualities of the sounds being heard.

When he concentrates his mind on these sounds with an earnest desire to gain the divine ear-element, in time a mind-door adverting consciousness will arise taking one of these sounds for its object. This will be followed by three or four *javanas* of the preliminary or access stage, and a fourth or fifth of the absorption level belonging to the fourth *jhāna*. The faculty of knowledge arisen in association with this absorption consciousness is called the divine ear-element.

If the yogin wishes to hear distant sounds he should begin by delimiting a small area, master the ability to hear the sounds in that area, and then extend the range of his hearing outward by degrees. As his ability improves he can hear distinctly all the sounds on earth and in the other planes of existence within a world system and even further. Moreover, if he wants to, he can define each sound separately, even when it is merged with other sounds.

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[1] PP., pp. 446-47. Vism., p. 343.

[2] PP., p. 446. "… dibbāya sota-dhātuyā cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. So dibbāya sotadhātuyā visuddhāya atikkanta-mānusikāya ubho sadde suṇāti, dibbe ca mānuse ca, ye dūre santike ca." DN. 1:79.

[3] PP., p. 446. Vism., p. 343.

3. The third abhiññā: the knowledge of others' minds (cetopariya ñāṇa paracittavijānana)

The third *abhiññā* is the knowledge of others' minds, the ability to penetrate with one's own mind the mental states of others. The Buddha describes this *abhiññā* as follows:

> With his mind thus concentrated… he applies and directs his mind to the knowledge of the state of others' minds. Discriminating with his mind he understands the state of others' minds: that of a mind with passion he understands that it is with passion, of one free from passion that it is free from passion… with hatred… free from hatred… with delusion… free from delusion… that which is composed… distracted… grown great (having attained to the *rūpa* and the *arūpa jhānas*)… not grown great… mean… lofty… concentrated… not concentrated… emancipated… not emancipated. Thus he knows the state of others' minds.[1]

According to the explanation in the *Visuddhimagga*, a meditator who aspires to this knowledge must first have attained the divine eye, the faculty of supernormal vision (to be explained below). He should use the light-*kasiṇa* to extend light, radiating it into the physical hearts of the people whose minds he wishes to understand. With his divine eye he should then examine the color of the heart, on the basis of which he can interpret the state of mind. The procedure is based on the belief that there is an immediate correspondence between the color of the blood and the state of consciousness. According to Buddhaghosa, when a joyous state of mind is present the blood is red like banyan fruit, when a state accompanied by grief is present the blood is black like rose-apple fruit, and when a state accompanied by serenity is present the blood is clear like sesamum oil.[2] Thus by perceiving with the divine eye the color of the blood the yogin can know the quality of a person's consciousness. However, Buddhaghosa does not mention the correspondence between blood-color and states of mind accompanied by greed, hatred, delusion, and their opposites, as given in the sutta.

Once the meditator gains familiarity with reading minds on the basis of the blood color, he can learn to penetrate the minds of others directly, without having to rely on a physical basis for making inferences. It should be pointed out, however, that a meditator possessing this faculty of knowledge still cannot penetrate the minds of those on a higher level of attainment than his own. Thus a worldling with mundane direct knowledge cannot penetrate the mind of an ariyan and know how the latter is free from certain defilements. Similarly, a stream-enterer cannot penetrate the mind of a once-returner, a once-returner the mind of a non-returner, a non-returner the mind of an arahant, or an arahant the mind of a *paccekabuddha* or fully enlightened Buddha. The converse, however, is possible: one on a higher plane, if he has the faculty of penetrating others' minds, can know the minds of those on a lower plane.[1]

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[1] BMTP., pp. 445-46. "So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgane vigatūpakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite ānejjappatte ceto pariyañāṇāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. So parasattānaṃ parapuggalānaṃ cetasā ceto paricca pajānāti – sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ sarāgaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti, vītarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ vīta rāgaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti, sadosaṃ… sadosaṃ…, vīta dosaṃ… vītadosaṃ…, samohaṃ… samohaṃ…, saṃkhittaṃ vā… saṃkhittaṃ…, vikkhittaṃ vā… vikkhittaṃ…, mahaggataṃ vā… mahaggataṃ…, amahaggataṃ vā… amahaggataṃ…, sa-uttaraṃ vā… sa-uttaraṃ…, anuttaraṃ vā… anuttaraṃ…, samāhitaṃ… samāhitaṃ…, asamāhitaṃ vā… asamāhitaṃ…, vimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ vimuttaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti, avimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ avimuttaṃ cittaṃ ti pajānāti." DN. 1:79-80

[2] PP., p. 449. Vism., pp. 344-45.

4. The fourth abhiññā: the knowledge of recollecting previous lives (pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa)

The knowledge of recollecting previous lives is explained in the suttas as follows:

> With his mind thus concentrated… he applies and directs his mind to the knowledge of recollecting previous existences. He recollects various kinds of former lives, such as one birth, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand births, many cycles of evolution of the universe, of dissolution, and of evolution and dissolution. 'In that one I had such a name, clan, caste, such sustenance, experiencing such pleasure and pain, and having such an end of life. Passing away thence I was reborn in such a place. There too I had such a name, clan… and such an end of life. Passing away thence I was reborn here'. Thus he remembers various kinds of his former lives with their modes and details.[2]

According to the word explanation of the name for this *abhiññā*, "previous lives" means the mental and physical aggregates experienced in one's own personal continuum in former births. "Recollection" (*anussati*), is the memory by which one recollects past existences, and the *abhiññā* itself is the knowledge (*ñāṇa*) arising out of that memory.[3] The *Visuddhimagga* teaches that there are six classes of men who possess this knowledge – other sectarians, ordinary disciples of the Buddha, the great disciples, the chief disciples, *paccekabuddhas*, and fully enlightened Buddhas. The range of recollection belonging to these persons is proportional to their spiritual stature: sectarians can recollect only as far back as forty aeons (*kappa*), ordinary disciples as far as a thousand aeons, the eighty great disciples as far as a hundred thousand aeons, the two chief disciples as far as an incalculable (*asaṅkheyya*) and a hundred thousand aeons, and *paccekabuddhas* as far as two incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons. For the fully enlightened Buddhas there is no limit to their capacity for recollection, which excels in speed and clarity as well.[4]

A meditator who wishes to cultivate this knowledge should attain the fourth *jhāna* as a basis for direct knowledge and then emerge from it. Having emerged he should start recalling his most recent activities in as precise detail as possible. Then he should go back in time by periods of the day, watches of the night, days and nights, etc. If he cannot recollect something he should attain the basic *jhāna*, emerge, and advert. The experience of the *jhāna* clears away the obstructions to memory so that the apparently lost events become as evident as when a lamp is lit. Beginning with moments, he should go back in increasingly larger units – days, months, years, and so on – until he arrives at the moment of rebirth in the present existence. At this point he should advert to the mind and body at the moment of death in his preceding existence. If he cannot recall his past life at once due to the separation between lives he should not give up the task, but should attain the basic *jhāna*, emerge, and advert again and again if necessary.

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[1] PP., p. 473. Vism., p. 364.

[2] BMTP., pp. 447-48. DN. 1:81.

[3] PP., p. 451. Vism., p. 346.

[4] PP., p. 452. Vism. p. 346.

When his ability has matured there will arise in him a mind-door adverting consciousness making its object the mind-body compound existing at the death-moment of his previous life. This will be followed by four or five impulsions (*javanas*) with the same object, the last of which is an absorption consciousness of the fourth *jhāna*. The knowledge associated with that consciousness is the knowledge of recollecting previous lives. Then beginning with the recollection of a single past life, the meditator should repeat the procedure with more and more past lives, until he can recall in detail his past experiences in entire aeons on end.[1] The Buddha compares this knowledge to the memory of a man who travels from village to village: while staying in one village he can recall the number of villages he has already visited, what he did in each village, and all the details of his experience in each village.[2]

5. The fifth abhiññā: the divine eye (dibbacakkhu) – the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings (cutūpapātañāṇa)

The text describing this *abhiññā* reads:

> With his mind thus concentrated… he applies and directs his mind to the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings. With his divine vision, purified and surpassing human sight, he sees beings passing away and being reborn again, low or high, of good or bad appearance, in happy or miserable existences, according to their karma. He fully realizes that those beings who are revilers of the noble ones, who are of false views, who acquire the karma of their false views, at the dissolution of the body after death have been reborn in a miserable existence, in hell. But those beings who are given to good conduct in deed, word and thought, who are not revilers of the noble ones, who are of right views, who acquire the karma of their right views, at the dissolution of the body after death have been reborn in a happy existence, in the world of heaven.[3]

The knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings is acquired by means of the divine eye, a supernormal faculty of vision called "divine" because it is similar to the vision of the deities in its ability to perceive objects at remote distances and to see objects hidden behind walls, etc. This vision is also said to be "purified" because by bringing both death and rebirth into range, it contributes to the purification of understanding. One who sees only passing away but not rebirth generally inclines to the annihilationist view that a being is extinguished at death; one who sees only birth but not the previous passing away generally inclines to the view that a new being arises. But one who sees both can acquire the purified view of rebirth according to *kamma*, thus abandoning these defiled views. The *Visuddhimagga* points out that one with the divine eye cannot see death and rebirth at the precise moments of their occurrence, due to the brevity and extreme subtlety of these events. What he sees are beings on the verge of death who will now die, and then those who have taken rebirth and have just re-appeared.[1]

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[1] PP., pp. 453-55. Vism., pp. 347-49.

[2] DN. 1:81-82.

[3] BMTP., p. 451. DN. 1:82.

The commentaries recommend three *kasiṇas* as the object for developing this knowledge – namely, the fire *kasiṇa*, white *kasiṇa*, or light *kasiṇa*; of the three, the light *kasiṇa* is said to be the most effective. After emerging from the basic *jhāna*, the meditator should focus on one of these *kasiṇas*, stopping at the level of access concentration. He should not enter absorption since if he does he will not be able to perform the preliminary work for the direct-knowledge. At the level of access the meditator should extend the *kasiṇa* image over a predetermined area, so that its light illuminates the area and visible forms within its space come into range of his vision. If the light disappears he should again enter the basic *jhāna*, emerge, and pervade the area with light. As time goes on he develops the ability to pervade any area with light and remain watching the visible forms there for a whole day. When visible forms that are not perceptible to the ordinary fleshly eye such as objects inside the body, objects hidden behind walls, objects in other planes of existence or in other world systems – come into the focus of the meditator's eye of knowledge and are seen directly, then the divine eye has arisen. To make this divine eye the instrument for perceiving the passing away and rebirth of beings, the meditator should apply his divine vision to this object until it comes into view.

The *Visuddhimagga* says that the divine eye, or knowledge of passing away and re-arising, has two accessory kinds of knowledge, namely, knowledge of the future (*anāgataṃsa ñāṇa*), and knowledge of faring according to *kamma* (*yathākammūpaga-ñāṇa*).[2] The former is the ability to foresee where a being will be reborn in the future and to foresee the course of future events. The latter is the ability to discern the *kamma* of the past that brought a being to a particular destiny in the present. Though these two types of knowledge are made possible by the divine eye, they differ from the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings in that this last *abhiññā* has the present as its objective range while the other two have as their objective range the future and the past respectively. By counting these modes of direct knowledge separately, the number of mundane *abhiññās* possible for a meditator is totaled at seven. But when they are included within the divine eye, the number is given as five.

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[1] PP., pp. 465-66. Vism., p. 358.

[2] PP., pp. 471, 477-78. Vism., pp. 363, 367-68.

6. The sixth abhiññā: the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers (āsavakkhayañāṇa)

The sixth direct-knowledge available to a meditator is the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. The "cankers" are called in Pāli *āsavas*, meaning literally that which flows out; thus the word is sometimes translated "outflows." The term signifies certain fundamental defilements which "flow out" from the mind, causing spiritual corruption and sustaining the process of *saṃsāra*. In the earliest texts the *āsavas* are usually given as three in number: the canker of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the canker of (craving for) existence (*bhavāsava*), and the canker of ignorance (*avijjāsava*). Other texts, particularly those of the Abhidhammapiṭaka, add a fourth, the canker of wrong views (*diṭṭhāsava*).[1]

The meditator's attainment of the destruction of the cankers is described in the suttas in the following passage:

> With his mind thus concentrated… he applies, he directs his mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. He knows suffering as it is; he knows the origin of suffering as it is; he knows the cessation of suffering as it is; he knows the path leading to the cessation of suffering as it is. He knows the cankers as they are; he knows the origin of the cankers as it is; he knows the cessation of the cankers as it is; he knows the path leading to the cessation of cankers as it is. The mind of him who knows thus is liberated from the canker of sensual desire, from the canker of existence, and from the canker of ignorance. In him who is liberated the knowledge arises that he is liberated. He understands: 'Rebirth is destroyed; the noble life has been lived; what was to be done has been done; nothing else remains to be done henceforth'.[2] (Wr. tr.).

According to the commentary, in this passage the destruction of the cankers can signify either *nibbāna* or the fourth supramundane path, the path of arahatship.[3] *Nibbāna* is called the destruction of the cankers because it is the state wherein the cankers are utterly destroyed; the path of arahatship is called thus because it brings about the destruction of the cankers. The "knowledge of the destruction of the cankers" is the faculty of knowledge contained in the consciousness belonging to the path of arahatship. As the stock description makes clear, the content of this knowledge is the Four Noble Truths. By knowing and seeing for himself with direct perception the Four Noble Truths in their full depth and range, the meditator eradicates the mental corruptions and attains

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1. Dhs., p. 221.

2. "So evaṃ samāhite citte… āsavānaṃ khaya-ñāṇāya cittaṃ abbhinīharati abhininnāmeti. So 'idaṃ dukkhan'ti yatthābhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ayaṃ dukkha-samudayo'ti yatthābhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ayaṃ dukkha-nirodho'ti yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā'ti yathā bhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ime āsavā' ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ayaṃ āsavasamudayo'ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ayaṃ āsavanirodho'ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, 'ayaṃ āsavanirodhagāminīpaṭipadā'ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. Tassa evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati bhavāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati avijjāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati, 'vimuttasmim vimuttaṃ' ti ñāṇaṃ hoti, 'khīnā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyā'ti pajānāti." DN. 1:83-84.

3. DN.A. 1:200-201.

complete emancipation. As this realization results from insight, we will discuss it more fully in the next chapter, in connection with the supramundane paths.

For the present two observations should be made concerning the sixth *abhiññā*. First, we should note that though the texts often show the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers as following the fourth *jhāna*, the latter is not indispensable for its attainment. The realization of the Four Noble Truths can arise with any *jhāna* as its basis, and it is even recognized that some meditators can achieve the liberating knowledge without any previous experience in the mundane *jhānas*, solely by the power of their faculty of wisdom. What is required in all cases for the attainment of the noble paths is the development of insight (*vipassanābhāvanā*), which can be either based upon some prior attainment in *jhānic* concentration or proceed in a "dry" manner based solely upon the momentary concentration connected with mindful observation of phenomena. In this respect the sixth *abhiññā* differs from the other five, which all presuppose proficiency in the eight attainments belonging to absorption-concentration.

For this reason the sixth *abhiññā* differs from the other five in a second respect, namely, that it is regarded as an acquisition exclusive to the Buddha's dispensation. The other five *abhiññās* are all mundane, being based solely upon the development of concentration, since the methods of developing concentration are available in non-Buddhist disciplines, those who follow these disciplines and achieve sufficient power of concentration can also acquire the five mundane *abhiññās*. However, the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers is a supramundane attainment which arises out of insight into the nature of phenomena. Hence it can only be gained by Buddhas, *paccekabuddhas*, and arahant disciples. In the case of the Buddhas and *paccekabuddhas* it arises out of their own self-evolved wisdom (*sayaṃbhūñāṇa*); in the case of disciples it arises by practising insight meditation in accordance with the instructions received from a Buddha or from teachers who transmit his dispensation.

Because of these differences between the sixth *abhiññā* and the others, the *abhiññās* are collected together into two groups, overlapping, but distinct. On the one hand there is the five *abhiññās*, comprising the five kinds of mundane direct-knowledge; on the other there is the six *abhiññās*, comprising the five mundane forms of direct-knowledge together with the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. While the mundane *abhiññās* are regarded as ornaments of a yogin within the Buddha's dispensation, the sixth *abhiññā* is regarded as its vital essence, the supreme goal of the entire practice of meditation.

Other Kinds of Supernormal Knowledge

In addition to the six *abhiññās*, certain suttas mention two other kinds of superior knowledge following the fourth *jhāna*. These are called "knowledge and vision" (*ñāṇadassana*) and "the knowledge of the mind-created body" (*manomaya iddhi ñāṇa*). In the texts they immediately precede the six *abhiññās*, though the eight are not collected together into a single group with a collective name.[1]

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[1] DN. 1:76-77. MN. 2:17-18.

The textual description of "knowledge and vision" is as follows:

> With his heart thus serene…, he applies and bends down his mind to that insight that comes from knowledge [knowledge and vision]. He grasps the fact: 'This body of mine has form, it is built up of the four elements, it springs from father and mother, it is continually renewed by so much boiled rice and juicy foods, its very nature is impermanence, it is subject to erosion, abrasion, dissolution, and disintegration; and therein is this consciousness of mine, too, bound up, on that does it depend.[1]

According to the commentary, "knowledge and vision" in this passage signifies the knowledge arising through insight (*vipassanāñāṇa*).[2] After emerging from the fourth *jhāna*, the yogin directs his attention to his body and mind. He first discerns the body, and sees it as material, compounded, dependently arisen, impermanent, subject to destruction. He then directs his attention to the mind, and sees the mind occuring in dependence on the body, sharing its conditioned, impermanent, and insubstantial nature. This knowledge of insight, brought to its apex, issues in the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. A fuller account of insight-knowledge will be given in the next chapter.

The second auxiliary type of higher knowledge is the knowledge of the mind-created body. This knowledge seems similar to the *iddhis*, and is in fact called *manomayiddhi*, but it is not included in the *iddhividhañāṇa*. The textual description reads:

> With his mind thus concentrated…, he creates from this body another body which has material form, is mind-made, having all its major and minor parts, not deficient in any sense organ.[3] (Wr. tr.).

The Buddha compares the process by which a bhikkhu mentally creates another body resembling his own and draws it out from the original to the act by which a man draws a reed from its sheath, a sword from its scabbard, or a snake from its slough. In each case the extracted article resembles its container but can be seen as clearly distinct from it.[4] The *Visuddhimagga* explains that if a meditator wishes to create the mind-made body he should emerge from the basic fourth *jhāna*, advert to his own body, and resolve that his body be hollow. When it presents itself to him as hollow, he should do the preliminary work and then resolve: "Let there be another body inside it." Another body then appears within his original body which he can draw out "like a reed from its sheath, like a sword from its scabbard, like a snake from its slough."[5]

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1. Dial. 1:86-87. "So evaṃ samāhite citte… ñāṇadassanāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. So evaṃ pajānāti: 'Ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpī cātummahābhūtiko mātāpettikasambhavo odānakummāsupacayo aniccucchādanaparimaddanabhedanaviddhaṃsanadhammo, idaṃ ca pana me viññāṇaṃ ettha sitaṃ ettha paṭibaddhaṃ' ti." DN. 1:76.

2. DN.A. 1:197.

3. "So evaṃ samāhite citte… So imamhā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ sabbaṇgapaccangiṃ ahīnindriyaṃ." DN. 1:77.

4. *Ibid.*

5. PP., p. 444. Vism., p. 342.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga describes one other supernormal power of the *iddhi* type not explicitly mentioned in the suttas, though implied by certain incidents. This is the supernormal power of transformation (*vikubbaṇa iddhi*). The Paṭisambhidāmagga exposition of this power reads:

> He abandons his normal appearance and shows the appearance of a boy or the appearance of a Naga (serpent), or the appearance of a Supanna (winged demon), or the appearance of an Asura (demon), or the appearance of the Ruler [of Gods] (Indra), or the appearance of some [other sensual sphere] deity, or the appearance of a Brahmā, or the appearance of the sea, or the appearance of a rock or the appearance of a lion, or the appearance of a tiger, or the appearance of a leopard, or he shows an elephant, or he shows a horse, or he shows a chariot, or he shows a foot soldier, or he shows a manifold military array.[1]

To attain this power, according to the *Visuddhimagga*, the meditator should first resolve to appear in a particular form, such as the form of a boy. Then he should enter and emerge from the basic fourth *jhāna* and advert to his appearance in the form chosen. Again he should enter the *jhāna*, emerge, and resolve, "Let me be a boy, etc. of such and such a type." Simultaneously with his resolution he appears as a boy or as anything else he chooses. However, it is not necessary for the meditator to effect the transformation on his own body. He can simply resolve upon showing some form, such as an elephant, a horse, etc., and that form will become manifest before himself and others.[2]

The Jhānas and Rebirth

According to Buddhist doctrine the influence of the *jhānas* is not confined merely to this present existence but extends beyond to future lives, determining an individual's destiny in the course of his movement through *saṃsāra*. The Buddha teaches that all sentient beings in whom ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) remain present, even if only dormantly, are subject to rebirth. As long as there is a desire to go on existing in some form the process of existence will continue. The craving for existence lies at the hub of the wheel of becoming, sustaining its constant revolution.

The specific factor which determines the place and conditions of rebirth is *kamma*. *Kamma* is volitional action – deeds, words, and thoughts expressive of deliberate intention. *Kammas* are of two general kinds: unwholesome *kammas* (*akusalakamma*), which are actions rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion, and wholesome *kammas* (*kusalakamma*), which are actions rooted in non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. Each *kamma* or intentional action that a person performs becomes accumulated in his mental continuum, where it remains as a force capable of producing results (*vipāka*) in the future. These results correspond to the ethical quality of the action: wholesome

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[1] PP., p. 444. Vism., p. 342. Pts., p. 388.

[2] PP., p. 444. Vism., p. 342.

kammas bring happiness and success, unwholesome *kammas* bring suffering and failure. In relation to the rebirth process, wholesome *kammas* issue in a good rebirth, unwholesome *kammas* in a bad one.

Of the many *kammas* a person performs and accumulates in the course of his lifetime, one *kamma* will come to the surface at the time of death to determine his state of rebirth. The *kammas* that take on this decisive role are ranked into grades of precedence. Priority is given to morally weighty *kamma* (*garuka kamma*), extremely powerful virtuous or evil deeds. Weighty virtuous deeds are the attainment of the *jhānas*; weighty evil deeds include patricide, matricide, killing an arahat, wounding a Buddha, and causing schism in the Sangha. Next in order come morally significant deeds performed near the time of death, then habitual actions, and lastly, miscellaneous stored up *kammas*.[1] Those *kammas* which do not actually generate rebirth can still produce their results in the course of a person's life, either supporting, countering, or annihilating the effects of the rebirth-generative *kamma*.

According to Buddhist cosmology, there are many planes of existence where beings can take rebirth through their *kamma*. These planes are grouped into three general spheres: the sense sphere (*kāmāvacarabhūmi*), which is the field of rebirth for evil *kammas* and for non-*jhānic* meritorious *kammas*; the fine material sphere (*rūpāvacarabhūmi*), which is the field of rebirth for the fine material *jhānas*; and the immaterial sphere (*arūpāvacarabhūmi*), which is the field of rebirth for the immaterial attainments.[2]

If an unwholesome *kamma* becomes determinative of rebirth, it will produce rebirth in one of four planes: [1] the woeful state (*niraya*), which itself has many subdivisions; [2] the animal kingdom (*tiracchānayoni*): [3] the sphere of tormented spirits or "hungry ghosts" (*pettivisaya*); and [4] the host of titans (*asurakāya*). These four states are collectively called the plane of misery (*apāyabhūmi*), the bad destinations (*duggati*), and the downfall (*vinipāta*). If a wholesome *kamma* of a type below the level of mundane *jhānas* determines rebirth, it will produce rebirth in either the human world (*manussa-loka*) or in one of the six sense sphere heavenly worlds, namely: (1] the realm of the four great kings (*cātummahārājikadevaloka*), [2] the realm of the thirty-three gods (*tāvatiṃsa*); [3] the realm of Yama gods (*yāma*); [4] the realm of delight (*tusita*); [5] the realm of gods who rejoice in their own creations (*nimmānarati*); and, [6] the realm of gods who lord over the creations of others (*paranimmitavasavatti*). These seven realms, the human world and the six heavenly worlds, together make up the sense sphere plane of happiness (*kāmāvacara sugatibhūmi*).[3]

Above the sense sphere realms are the fine material realms (*rūpāvacarabhūmi*). Rebirth into these realms is gained through the attainment of the four fine material *jhānas*, providing the *jhāna* is still retained at the time of death. There are altogether sixteen realms in the fine material plane. These are correlated with the four *jhānas* in a systematic way. For each of the three lower *jhānas* there are three realms of rebirth, graded according to whether the *jhāna* was mastered to an inferior, middling, or superior degree; for the fourth *jhāna* the division is different, as we will see.

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[1] Narada, *Manual.*, pp. 259-62.

[2] For a good synopsis of Buddhist cosmology and its connection with rebirth, see *Ibid.*, pp. 233-55.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 233, 236-39.

Those who have practiced the first *jhāna* to a minor degree are reborn in the realm of the retinue of Brahmā (*brahmapārisajja*), those who have practiced it to a moderate degree are reborn in the realm of the ministers of Brahmā (*brahmapurohita*), and those who have practiced it to a superior degree are reborn in the realm of the great Brahmā (*mahābrahmā*). Similarly, practicing the second *jhāna* to a minor degree brings rebirth in the realm of minor luster (*parittābha*), to a moderate degree rebirth in the realm of infinite luster (*appamānābha*), and to a superior degree in the realm of radiant luster (*ābhassara*). Again, practicing the third *jhāna* to a minor degree brings rebirth in the realm of minor aura (*parittasubha*), to a moderate degree in the realm of infinite aura (*appamānasubha*), and to a superior degree in the realm of steady aura (*subhakiṇhā*).

Corresponding to the fourth *jhāna* there are seven realms: the realm of great reward (*vehapphala*), the realm of non-percipient beings (*asaññasatta*), and the five pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*). With this *jhāna* the previous pattern is not observed. It seems that all beings who practice the fourth *jhāna* of the mundane level without reaching any supramundane attainment are reborn in the realm of great reward.

There is no differentiation by way of inferior, moderate, or superior grades of development. The realm of non-percipient beings is reached by those who attain the fourth *jhāna* and then use the power of their attainment to take rebirth with only material bodies; they do not acquire consciousness again until they pass away from this realm. The five pure abodes are called the durable realm (*aviha*), the serene realm (*atappa*), the beautiful realm (*sudassi*), the clear-sighted realm (*sudassa*), and the highest realm (*akaniṭṭha*). These five realms are open only to non-returners (*anāgāmis*), noble disciples who have eradicated the fetters binding them to the sense sphere and thence automatically take rebirth in higher realms. From here they attain arahatship and reach final deliverance.

Beyond the fine material sphere lie the immaterial realms (*arūpāvacarabhūmi*). These are four in number – the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception. As should be evident, these are the realms of rebirth for those who, without having broken the fetters that bind them to *saṃsāra*, achieve and master the four immaterial *jhānas*. Those yogins who have mastery over these attainments at the time of death take rebirth in the appropriate plane, where they abide until the *kammic* force of the *jhāna* is exhausted. Then they pass away, to take rebirth in some other realm as determined by their accumulated *kamma*.[1]

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[1] For a schematic diagram of the planes of Buddhist cosmology and their connection with *kamma*, see Appendix 5.

Chapter Seven

THE WAY OF WISDOM

The goal of the Buddhist path is not a temporary appeasement of mental affliction but complete and permanent liberation from suffering. To facilitate the achievement of this goal the Buddha has divided his path into three stages of training – moral discipline (*sīla*) concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Each stage in this triad serves as the foundation for the next and the entire set as the foundation for deliverance:

> Such is moral discipline, such is concentration, such is wisdom. Concentration supported by moral discipline brings great benefit and fruit, wisdom supported by concentration brings great benefit and fruit. The mind supported by wisdom is completely liberated from the cankers – from the canker of sensual desire, the canker of existence, the canker of views, and the canker of ignorance.[1] (Wr. tr.).

The mundane *jhānas*, comprising the four fine material *jhānas* and four immaterial *jhānas*, pertain to the stage of concentration. As such they form an important part of the training. However, taken by themselves, the *jhānas* do not suffice to ensure complete deliverance from suffering. They lead a long part of the way to the goal, but to attain the final cessation of suffering they must ultimately be supplemented and fulfilled by the final stage of practice, the training in wisdom.

In the present chapter we will examine the nature of wisdom and the methods by which it is cultivated. Beginning with a general explanation of wisdom and its function in the framework of the Buddhist path, we then move on to discuss the course laid down for its development. The basis for our discussion will be the seven purifications (*sattavisuddhi*), the principal categorical system used by the Theravāda tradition to treat the stages in the unfolding of wisdom. Since wisdom presupposes a certain proficiency in concentration it is inevitable that *jhāna* comes to claim a place in its development. This place, however, is not fixed and invariable, but as we will see allows for wide differences depending on the individual meditator's disposition.

Fundamental to the discussion in this chapter and the next is a distinction between two terms crucial to Theravāda philosophical exposition. These two terms are "mundane" (*lokiya*) and "supramundane" (*lokuttara*). The term "mundane" applies to all phenomena comprised in the world (*loka*) of the five aggregates of clinging (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) – material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. It covers subtle states of consciousness as well as material and emotional states, virtue as well as evil, meditative attainments as well as sensual engrossments.

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[1] "Iti sīlaṃ iti samādhi iti paññā, sīla-paribhāvito samādhi mahapphalo hoti mahānisaṃso, samādhi-paribhāvitā paññā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā, paññāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ sammad eva āsavehi vimuccati, seyyathīdaṃ kāmāsavā bhavāsavā diṭṭhāsavā avijjāsavā ti." DN. 2:123.

The term “supramundane”, in contrast, applies exclusively to that which transcends the world of the clinging-aggregates. It covers nine terms, the nine *lokuttarā dhammā*: *nibbāna*, the four noble paths (*magga*) leading to *nibbāna*, and their corresponding four fruits (*phala*) which experience the bliss of *nibbāna*. It is hoped that the discussion to follow will make the meanings of these terms clear.

The Nature of Wisdom

The reason the mundane *jhānas* cannot by themselves bring final liberation from suffering is because they are incapable of cutting off the causes of suffering. The Buddha teaches that the fundamental source of suffering, the driving power behind the cycle of rebirths, is the defilements (*kilesa*), principally the three unwholesome roots of greed, hatred, and delusion. Concentration of the absorptive level, no matter how deeply it might be developed, only leads to a suspension of the defilements, not to their radical elimination. As we saw earlier, concentration whether access or *jhāna*, abandons the hindrances solely by way of suppression (*vikkhambanappahāna*).[1] Even at its deepest it cannot effect the more fundamental abandonment required for liberation, namely, the abandonment by eradication (*samuccnedappahāna*).[2]

Because it cannot dismantle the latent seeds of the defilements, bare mundane *jhāna* does not figure as a sufficient attainment in the Buddhist map of the liberating path. Mundane *jhāna* suffers from two conspicuous defects. Firstly, if not persisted in, it can be lost. Through carelessness or complacency a yogin can again be overpowered by the force of the defilements, thereby falling away from *jhāna* and the rest of his spiritual training. Thus the Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita describes the case of a monk who attains the four *jhānas*, and thinking to himself complacently “I have won the four *jhānas*”

> … keeps company with monks, nuns, lay-disciples, men and women, rajahs, their ministers, course-setters or their disciples. Living in company, untrammelled, rude, given over to gossip, passion corrupts his heart; and with his heart corrupted by passion, he disavows the training and returns to the lower life.[3]

The second defect which besets the *jhānas* is that bare mundane *jhāna*, even when sustained, does not by itself terminate the cycle of rebirths. To the the contrary, it even perpetuates the round in its own way. For each fine material and immaterial *jhāna* attained, if held to with delight and clinging, brings about a rebirth in that particular plane of existence corresponding to its own *kammic* potency, which can then be followed by a rebirth in some lower realm when the generative *kamma* of the *jhāna* is exhausted. As the Buddha says:

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[1] See above Ch. III, pp. 76-80.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] GS. 3: p. 280. “So saṃsaṭṭho viharati bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīhi upāsakehi upāsikāhi raññā rājamahāmattehi titthiyehi titthitiyasāvakehi, tassa saṃsaṭṭhassa vissaṭṭhassa pakatassa bhassaṃ anuyuttassa viharato rāgo cittaṃ anuddhaṃseti, so rāgānuddhaṃsena cittena sikkhaṃ paccakkhāya hīnāyāvattati.” AN. 3.393.

> Now, monks, a certain person here, aloof from sense-desires, aloof from evil conditions, enters upon the first musing [*jhāna*], which is accompanied by thought directed and sustained, born of seclusion, zestful and easeful, and abides therein. He enjoys its sweetness, longs for it and finds happiness therein. Established therein, given thereto, generally spending his time therein and not falling away therefrom, when he makes an end he is reborn in the company of devas of the Brahma-group. A kalpa, monks, is the life-span of the devas of the Brahma-group. Therein the ordinary man stays and spends his time according to the life-span of those devas; then he goes to purgatory or the womb of an animal, he goes to the peta-realm.[1]

The same pattern is repeated for each of the higher attainments. i.e., the remaining *jhānas* and the *āruppas*.[2]

What is required to achieve complete deliverance from the cycle of rebirths is the eradication of the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred, and delusion. Since the most basic of these roots is delusion (*moha*), also called ignorance (*avijjā*), the key to liberation lies in the eradication of ignorance by developing its direct opposite, namely wisdom (*paññā*). For this reason the Buddha places wisdom at the head of all the spiritual faculties. It appears among the groups of training factors as the basis for success consisting in inquiry (*vīmaṃsā-iddhipāda*), the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*), the power of wisdom (*paññābala*), the investigation of phenomena enlightenment factor (*dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅga*), and right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) of the Noble Eightfold Path. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi in its definition of the faculty of wisdom spells out a whole list of equivalent terms, which testifies to its importance and the unrivalled esteem in which it is held:

> The wisdom which there is on that occasion is understanding, search, research, searching the truth, discernment, discrimination, differentiation, erudition, proficiency, subtlety, criticism, reflection, analysis, breadth, sagacity, leading, insight, intelligence, incitement, wisdom as faculty, wisdom as power, wisdom as a sword, wisdom as a height, wisdom as light, wisdom as glory, wisdom as splendour, wisdom as a precious stone, the absence of dullness, searching the Truth, right views, – this is the wisdom that there then is.[3]

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[1] GS. 2:130. "Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajam pītisukhaṃ paṭhamajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. So tad assādeti taṃ nikāmeti tena ca vittiṃ āpajjati, tattha ṭhito tad-adhimutto tabbahulavihārī aparihīno kālaṃ kurumāno Brahmakāyikānaṃ devānaṃ sahavyataṃ uppajjati. Brahmakāyikānaṃ bhikkhave devānaṃ kappo āyuppamānaṃ, tattha puthujjano yāvatāyukaṃ ṭhatvā yāvatakaṃ tesaṃ devānaṃ āyuppamānaṃ taṃ sabbaṃ khepetvā nirayaṃ pi gacchati tiracchānayoniṃ pi gacchati pittivisayaṃ pi gacchati." AN. 2:126.

[2] GS. 1:245-46. AN. 1:267-68.

[3] *Psy. Ethics*, p. 18. "Katamaṃ tasmiṃ samaye paññidriyaṃ hoti? Yā tasmiṃ samaye paññā pajānanā vicayo pavicayo sallakkhaṇā upalakkhaṇā paccūpalakkhaṇā pandiccaṃ kosallaṃ nepuṇṇaṃ vebhabyā cintā upaparikkhā bhūri medhā parināyikā vipassanā sampajaññaṃ patodo pañña paññindriyaṃ paññābalaṃ

An analytical exposition of wisdom found in the *Visuddhimagga*[1] discusses wisdom under six headings: [1] the definition of wisdom; [2] the sense in which it is called wisdom; [3] its characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause; [4] its classification; [5] method of development; and [6] its benefits. A brief consideration of these principles should help bring the nature of wisdom to light.

[1] Wisdom, according to Buddhaghosa, is defined as insight knowledge associated with wholesome states of consciousness.[2]

[2] Wisdom (*paññā*) is so called in the sense that it is an act of understanding (*pajānana*). It is a mode of knowing (*jānana*) distinct from and superior to the modes of perceiving (*sañjānana*) and cognizing (*vijānana*). What distinguishes wisdom from these other forms of cognition is its ability to comprehend the characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness and thereby to bring about the manifestation of the supramundane path.[3]

[3] Wisdom has the specific characteristic of penetrating the true nature of phenomena.[4] Each phenomenon possesses its own particular characteristic as well as the general characteristics common to all phenomena. The particular and general characteristics together make up the "true nature" (*sabhāva*) of phenomena. Wisdom is the penetration of this nature through direct, unmediated cognition. Its function is "to abolish the darkness of delusion which conceals the individual essences of states" and its manifestation is "non-delusion." Since the Buddha says that one whose mind is concentrated knows and sees things as they are, the proximate cause of wisdom is concentration.[5]

[4] The wisdom instrumental in attaining liberation is divided into two principal types: insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and the knowledge pertaining to the supramundane paths (*magga-ñāṇa*). The first is the direct penetration of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena – impermanence (*aniccatā*), suffering (*dukkhatā*), and selflessness (*anattatā*). It takes as its objective sphere the groups of mental phenomena constituting individual existence, i.e. the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandhā*) of material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.[6] Because insight-knowledge takes the world (*loka*) of conditioned formations (*saṅkhāra*) as its object it is regarded as a mundane (*lokiya*) form of wisdom. Insight-knowledge does not itself

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paññāsattaṃ paññāpasādo paññā āloko paññāobhāso paññāpajjoto paññāratanaṃ amoho dhammavicayo sammādiṭṭhi – idaṃ tasmiṃ samaye paññindriyaṃ hoti." Dhs., pp. 19-20.

[1] PP., pp. 479-89. Vism., pp. 369-75.

[2] PP., p. 479. "Kusalacittasampayuttaṃ vipassanāññānaṃ paññā." Vism., p. 369.

[3] PP., p. 480. Vism., p. 369.

[4] PP., p. 481. "Dhammasabhāvapaṭivedhalakkhaṇā paññā." Vism., p. 370.

[5] PP., p. 481. "Dhammānaṃ sabhāvapaṭicchādaka-mohāndhakāra-viddhaṃsanarasā; asammohapaccupaṭṭhānā; samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passatī ti [AN. 5:3] vacanato pana samādhi tassa padaṭṭhānaṃ." Vism., p. 370.

[6] In Pāli: *Rūpakkhandha*, *vedanākkhandha*, *saññākkhandha*, *saṅkhārakkhandha*, *viññāṇakkhandha*.

directly eradicate the defilements. It serves to prepare the way for the second type of wisdom, the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which emerges when insight has been brought to its climax. The wisdom of the path, occurring in the four distinct stages of the supramundane Noble Eightfold Path (to be discussed below), simultaneously realizes *nibbāna*, fathoms the Four Noble Truths, and cuts off the defilements. This wisdom is called "supramundane" (*lokuttara*) because it rises up (*uttarati*) from the world (*loka*) of the five aggregates to realize the state transcendent to the world, *nibbāna*.

[5] The Buddhist yogin, striving for deliverance, begins the development of wisdom by first securely establishing its roots – purified moral discipline and concentration. He then learns and masters the basic material upon which wisdom is to work – the aggregates, elements, sense bases, dependent arising, the Four Noble Truths, etc. He commences the actual practice of wisdom by cultivating insight into the impermanence, suffering, and selflessness of the five aggregates. When this insight reaches its apex it issues in supramundane wisdom, the right view factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. The wisdom of the path turns from conditioned formations to the unconditioned *nibbāna*, destroying thereby the latent defilements at their root.

[6] The removal of the defilements, the experiencing of *nibbāna*, and the achievement of the states of holiness culminating in arahatship – these, according to Buddhaghosa, are the benefits in developing wisdom.[1]

The Two Vehicles

The Theravāda tradition recognizes two alternative approaches to the development of wisdom, between which yogins are free to choose according to their aptitude and propensity. These two approaches are the vehicle of serenity (*samathayāna*) and the vehicle of insight (*vipassanayāna*). The meditators who follow them are called, respectively, the *samathayānika*, "one who makes serenity his vehicle," and the *vipassanāyānika*, "one who makes insight his vehicle." Since both vehicles, despite their names, are approaches to developing insight, to prevent misunderstanding the latter type of meditator is sometimes called a *suddhavipassanāyānika*, "one who makes bare insight his vehicle," or a *sukkhavipassaka*, "a dry insight worker." Though all three terms appear initially in the commentaries rather than in the sutras, the recognition of the two vehicles seems implicit in a number of canonical passages.

The *samathayānika* is a meditator who first attains access concentration or one of the eight mundane *jhānas*, then emerges and uses his attainment as a basis for cultivating insight until he arrives at the supramundane path. The experience of the path in any of its four stages always occurs at a level of *jhānic* intensity and thus necessarily includes supramundane *jhāna* under the heading of right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. In contrast to the *samathayānika*, the *vipassanāyānika* does not attain mundane *jhāna* prior to practicing insight-contemplation, or if he does, does not use it as an instrument for cultivating insight. Instead, without entering and emerging from *jhāna*, he proceeds directly to insight-contemplation on the mental and material phenomena that appear in the six spheres of sense experience – the five outer senses and thought. By means of this bare insight he reaches the noble path, which as in the former case again includes supramundane *jhāna* as a matter of necessity.

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[1] See Vism., Chapter XXIII.

The kingpost of the *vipassanāyānika*'*s* approach is the practice of mindfulness (*sati*), the bare non-discursive observation of the changing phenomena of mind and body. The Buddha expounds the practice of mindfulness in terms of four contemplations – the contemplation of body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), states of mind (*citta*), and mind-objects (*dhamma*). These four contemplations, the four "foundations of mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*), bring to the focus of the observational field the diverse classes of mental and material phenomena with their universal marks of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. The *samathayānika*, too, at the time he emerges from *jhāna* and begins insight-contemplation, has to practice the four foundations of mindfulness, as these have been called by the Buddha "the only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering upon the right path and the realization of *Nibbāna*."[1]

The classical source for the distinction between the two vehicles of serenity and insight is the *Visuddhimagga*, where it is explained that when a meditator begins the development of wisdom

> … if, firstly, his vehicle is serenity, [he] should emerge from any fine material or immaterial jhāna except the base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception, and he should discern, according to characteristic, function, etc. the jhāna factors consisting of applied thought, etc. and the states associated with them.[2]

The meditator whose vehicle is pure insight, on the other hand, is advised to begin by discerning material and mental phenomena directly, without utilizing a *jhāna* for this purpose.[3]

A contemporary meditation master, the Venerable Mahāsī Sayadaw, draws the distinction between the two types of meditators in more general terms:

> A person who, of these two, has first developed tranquility, and after having established himself in either access concentration or full concentration, subsequently contemplates the five groups of grasping, is called a *samathayānika*, i.e. one who has tranquility as his vehicle… He, however, who

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[1] Nyanatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha*, p. 61.

[2] PP., pp. 679-80. "Taṃ sampādetukāmena samathayānikena tāva, ṭhapetvā nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ avasesarūpārūpavacarajjhānānaṃ aññatarato vuṭṭhāya vitakkādīni jhānaṅgāni taṃsampayuttā ca dhammā lakkhaṇarasādivasena pariggahetabbā." Vism., p. 503. NB: Other commentarial passages allow access concentration (*upacārasamādhi*) to suffice for the vehicle of serenity. The last *āruppa* is excluded because its factors are too subtle to be discerned by a beginning meditator.

[3] PP., p. 680. Vism., p. 503.

> has neither produced access concentration nor full concentration, but from the very start applies insight to the five groups of grasping, is called a *suddhavipassanāyānika*, i.e. one who has pure insight as his vehicle.[1]

This second type of meditator is sometimes referred to by another name, *sukkhavipassaka* or "dry insight worker," which the commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* explains in a way that accentuates his lack of *jhāna*:

> The dry insight worker is one who does not obtain [mundane] *jhāna*, but makes pure insight his vehicle. He is called a "dry insight worker" because his insight is dry and rough, as this insight has not been moistened with the moisture of *jhāna*.[2] (Wr. tr.).

Although, as we mentioned earlier, the three terms – *samathayānika*, *vipassanāyānika*, and *sukkhavipassaka* – are terms of commentarial coinage, the distinction of vehicles and practitioners seems to draw directly from the Pāli Canon. The Buddha generally includes the four *jhānas* in complete expositions of his system of training, placing them before the development of insight and the attainment of the path, but a number of suttas give evidence for alternative approaches to the practice. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya the Buddha states:

> There is, monks, one person who gains internal serenity of mind but does not gain the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena;… one person who gains the higher wisdom of insight into phenomena but does not gain internal serenity of mind;… one person who gains neither;… and one person who gains both…[3] (Wr. tr.).

He urges the first, established on his serenity of mind, to strive to gain the wisdom of insight into phenomena, and the second, established on his wisdom or insight into phenomena, to strive to gain serenity of mind. The commentary explains "serenity of mind" as mental concentration of absorption (*appanācittasamādhi*) and the "higher wisdom of insight into phenomena" as the insight-knowledge discerning formations (*saṅkhārapariggahavipassanāñāṇa*), i.e. insight into the five aggregates.[4] The fact that individuals are capable of one attainment in the absence of the other provides a starting point for a differentiation of vehicles adapted to their differing capacities. In the end, however, all meditators have to enter upon the development of insight in order to reach the liberating path.

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[1] Mahāsi Sayadaw (U Sobhana Mahāthera of Burma), *The Progress of Insight Through the Stages of Purification*, *A Modern Pali Treatise on Buddhist Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation*, translated by Nyanaponika Thera with notes and the original Pāli text. (Kandy, Ceylon: The Forest Hermitage, 1965; reprint, Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1973), p. 2 (hereafter cited as PI.).

[2] "Ajhānalābhī suddhavipassanāyānikova sukkhavipassako. So hi jhānasinehena vipassanāya asiniddhabhāvato sukkhā lūkhā vipassanā etassāti sukkhavipassakoti vuccati." Vism.T. 2:474.

[3] "Tatra bhikkhave yāyaṃ puggalo lābhī ajjhattaṃ cetosamathassa na lābhī adhipaññādhammavipassanāya;… lābhī adhipaññādhammavipassanāya na lābhī ajjhattaṃ cetosamathassa;… na c'eva lābhī ajjhattaṃ cetosamathassa na lābhī adhipaññādhammavipassanāya;… yāyaṃ puggalo lābhī c'eva ajjhattaṃ cetosamathassa lābhī adhipaññādhammavipassanāya." AN. 2:92-93.

[4] AN.A. 2:325.

An even clearer enunciation of alternative vehicles to the goal is presented in a sutta spoken by the Venerable Ānanda. On one occasion Ānanda declared to a group of monks that there are some monks who develop insight preceded by serenity (*samathapubbaṅgamaṃ vipassanaṃ*) and some who develop serenity preceded by insight (*vipassanāpubbaṅgamaṃ samathaṃ*). Both approaches, in his account, issue in the supramundane path:

> Herein, your reverences, a monk develops insight preceded by calm. In him thus developing insight preceded by calm is born the Way. He follows along that Way, makes it grow, makes much of it. In him following, developing, making much of that Way, the fetters are abandoned, the lurking tendencies come to an end. Or again, your reverences, a monk develops calm preceded by insight. In him developing calm preceded by insight is born the Way. He follows along that Way, makes it grow,… come to an end.[1]

The commentarial exegesis of this passage (found in the Majjhima Nikāya commentary) explains the procedure for developing insight preceded by serenity thus:

> Here, someone first produces access concentration or absorption concentration; this is serenity. He contemplates with insight that serenity and its concomitant phenomena as impermanent, etc.; this is insight. Thus first comes serenity, afterwards insight.[2] (Wr. tr.).

The procedure for developing serenity preceded by insight is described as follows:

> Here, someone contemplates with insight the five aggregates of clinging as impermanent, etc. without having produced the aforesaid kinds of serenity (access and absorption); this is insight. With the completion of insight there arises in him mental one-pointedness having as object the renunciation of the phenomena produced therein; this is serenity. Thus first comes insight, afterwards serenity.[3] (Wr. tr.).

In case it should be suspected that the second type of meditator still attains mundane *jhāna* after developing insight, the subcommentary to the passage points out: “the mental one-pointedness he gains is right concentration of the supramundane path

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[1] GS. 2:162. “Idha āvuso bhikkhu samathapubbaṅgamaṃ vipassanaṃ bhāveti, tassa samathapubbaṅgamaṃ vipassanaṃ bhāvayato maggo sañjāyati. So taṃ maggaṃ āsevati bhāveti bahulīkaroti. Tassa taṃ maggaṃ āsevato bhāvayato bahulīkaroto saññojanāni pahīyanti anusayā vyanti honti. Puna ca paraṃ āvuso bhikkhu vipassanāpubbaṅgamaṃ samathaṃ bhāveti, tassa vipassanāpubbaṅgamaṃ samathaṃ bhāvayato maggo sañjāyati… vyanti honti.” AN. 2:157.

[2] “Idhekacco paṭhamaṃ upacārasamādhiṃ vā appanāsamādhiṃ vā uppādeti. Ayaṃ samatho. So taṃ ca taṃ sampayutte ca dhamme aniccādihi vipassati. Ayaṃ vipassanā. Iti paṭhamaṃ samatho pacchā vipassanā.” MN.A. 1:112.

[3] “Idha panekacco vuttappakāraṃ samathaṃ anuppādetvā’va pañcupādānakkhandhe aniccādihi vipassati. Ayaṃ vipassanā. Tassa vipassnāpāripūriyā tattha jātānaṃ dhammānaṃ vossaggārammaṇato uppajjati cittassa ekaggatā. Ayaṃ samatho. Iti paṭhamaṃ vipassanā; pacchā samatho.” MN.A. 1:113.

(*maggasammāsamādhi*) and its object, called 'renunciation' (*vavassagga*), is *nibbāna*."[1] (Wr. tr.). The Aṅguttara subcommentary explicitly identifies the second meditator with the *vipassanāyānika*: "'He develops serenity preceded by insight': this is said with reference to the *vipassanāyānika*."[2] (Wr. tr.).

Thus the *samathayānika* attains in order first access concentration or mundane *jhāna* and then insight-knowledge, by means of which he reaches the supramundane path containing wisdom under the heading of right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and supramundane *jhāna* under the heading of right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). The *vipassanāyānika*, in contrast, skips over mundane *jhāna* and goes directly into insight-contemplation. When he reaches the end of the progression of insight-knowledge he arrives at the supramundane path which, as in the previous case, brings together wisdom with supramundane *jhāna*. This *jhāna* counts as his accomplishment of serenity.

The Functions of Jhāna

For a meditator following the vehicle of serenity the attainment of *jhāna* fulfills two functions: first, it produces a basis of mental purity and inner collectedness needed for undertaking the work of insight-contemplation; and second, it serves as an object for the yogin to examine with insight in order to discern the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. *Jhāna* accomplishes the first function by providing a powerful instrument for overcoming the five hindrances, the defilements of sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. As we saw, the Buddha declares these five hindrances to be corruptions of the mind and weakeners of wisdom which prevent a man from seeing things as they are, cause blindness and ignorance, destroy wisdom, lead to vexation, and distract from *nibbāna*.[3] For wisdom to arise the mind must first be concentrated well, and to be concentrated it must be freed from the obscuring influence of the hindrances. This task is accomplished by the attainment of *jhāna*: access concentration causes the hindrances to subside, the first and following *jhānas* drive them further and further away. Cleared of the hindrances the mind becomes "pliant and supple, having radiant lucidity and firmness, and will concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints."[4] Therefore the *jhānas* are recommended as a means to provide the concentration and mental purification needed to cultivate wisdom.

In their capacity for producing concentration the *jhānas* are called the basis (*pāda*) for insight, and that particular *jhāna* a yogin enters and emerges from before commencing his practice of insight is designated the *pādakajjhāna*, the basic or foundational *jhāna*.

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[1] MN.T. 1:204.

[2] "Vipassanāpubbaṅgamaṃ samathaṃ bhāveti ti idaṃ pana vipassanāyānikassa vasena vuttaṃ." Sāriputta, [*Aṅguttara Nikāya Ṭīkā*] *Sāratthamañjūsā Nāma Aṅguttara Ṭīkā*. [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. 3 vols. (Rangoon, Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1960-61), 2:344 (hereafter cited as AN.T.).

[3] See above, Ch. III, pp. 104-108.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 108.

Insight cannot be practiced while absorbed in *jhāna*, since insight-meditation requires analysis, investigation, and observation, all of which are impossible when the thought faculty is immersed in one-pointed absorption. But after emerging from the *jhāna* the mind is cleared of the hindrances, and the stillness and clarity that then result conduce to precise, penetrating insight.

The *jhānas* also enter into the *samathayānika*'*s* practice in a second capacity; that is, as objects for scrutinization by insight. The practice of insight consists essentially in the examination of mental and physical phenomena to discover their marks of impermanence (*aniccatā*), suffering (*dukkhatā*), and selflessness (*anattatā*). The *jhānas* a yogin has attained and emerged from provide him with a readily available and strikingly clear object in which to seek out the three characteristics. After emerging from a *jhāna* the meditator will proceed to examine the *jhānic* consciousness, analyzing it into its components, defining them in their precise particularity, and discerning the way they exemplify the three universal marks. This process is called *sammasanañāṇa*, "comprehension-knowledge," and the *jhāna* subjected to such a treatment is termed the *sammasitajjhāna*, "the comprehended *jhāna*."[1] Though the basic *jhāna* and the comprehended *jhāna* will often be the same, the two do not necessarily coincide. A yogin cannot practice comprehension on a *jhāna* higher than he is capable of attaining, but a yogin who uses a higher *jhāna* as his *pādakajjhāna* can still practice insight-comprehension on lower *jhānas* he has previously attained and mastered. This admitted difference in nature between the *pādaka* and *sammasitajjhānas* leads to discrepant theories about the supramundane concentration of the noble path, as we will see below.[2]

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya the Buddha shows how arahatship, "the destruction of the cankers," is attained by a *samathayānika* yogin who attains a basic *jhāna* and after emerging from it makes that same *jhāna* the object of insight-comprehension:

> I say, monks, that the destruction of the cankers occurs in dependence on the first *jhāna*. With reference to what is this said? Here, monks, a monk enters and abides in the first *jhāna*… Whatever is contained there belonging to material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness – he contemplates these phenomena as impermanent, suffering, a disease, a boil, a dart, as misery, affliction, alien, disintegrating, empty, and selfless. He turns his mind away from those phenomena and focusses it on the deathless element… Standing upon that he reaches the destruction of the cankers.[3] (Wr. tr.).

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[1] PP., pp. 706-709. Vism., pp. 521-22.

[2] See below pp. 347-51.

[3] "Paṭhamaṃ p'āhaṃ bhikkhave jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khāyaṃ vadāmī ti iti kho pan'etaṃ vuttaṃ, kin c'etaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu vivicc'eva kāmehi… paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati… So yad eva tattha hoti rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ saṅkhāragataṃ viññāṇagataṃ, te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābadhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati. So tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivapeti, so tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivapetvā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃharati… So tattha ṭhito āsavānaṃ khayaṃ pāpuṇāti." AN. 4:422-23.

In entering the first *jhāna* before commencing insight, the meditator makes it his basic or foundational *jhāna*; in contemplating its factors as impermanent, suffering, and selfless (which comprise all the other terms of contemplation) he makes the first *jhāna* his object of insight-comprehension. The Buddha repeats the same procedure, with appropriate modifications, for the remaining fine material *jhānas* and the lower three immaterial *jhānas*; for the last immaterial *jhāna* and the attainment of cessation a variant method is used, as these two states due to their subtlety do not come directly into the range of insight-contemplation.

Whereas the sequence of training undertaken by the *samathayānika* meditator is evident and unproblematic, a difficulty seems to crop up in the case of the *vipassanāyānika*'*s* approach. This difficulty lies in accounting for the concentration he uses to provide a basis for insight. Concentration is needed in order to see and know things as they are. The standard order of practice repeated countless times throughout the canon is moral discipline, concentration, and wisdom, with concentration declared to be the foundation for wisdom. The Buddha calls concentration the supporting condition (*upanisā*) for "the knowledge and vision of things as they really are," while "one who lacks right concentration is deprived of the supporting condition for knowledge and vision of things as they are."[1] (Wr. tr.). Finally, in the sequence of the seven purifications through which all yogins must pass, the second purification – purification of mind (*cittavisuddhi*) – is shown to precede and support the five subsequent purifications that begin with purification of view (*diṭṭhivisuddhi*).[2] Purification of mind is generally defined as access and absorption concentration, and the last five purifications as the wisdom of insight and the path. Since each purification has to be fulfilled in due order before undertaking the next, the same problem surfaces of accounting for the concentration the *vipassanāyānika* uses to arrive at insight.

The solution to this problem is found in a type of concentration distinct from the access and absorption concentrations pertaining to the vehicle of serenity. This type of mental unification is called "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*). Despite its name, momentary concentration does not signify a single moment of concentration amidst a current of distracted thoughts. Rather, it denotes a dynamic concentration which flows from object to object in the everchanging flux of phenomena, retaining a constant degree of intensity and collectedness sufficient to purify the mind of the hindrances. Momentary concentration arises in the *samathayānika* yogin simultaneously with his post-*jhānic* attainment of insight, but for the *vipassanāyānika* it develops naturally and spontaneously in the course of his insight practice without his having to fix the mind upon a single exclusive object. Thus the follower of the vehicle of insight does not omit concentration altogether from his training, but develops it in a different manner from the practitioner of serenity. Skipping over the *jhānas*, he goes directly into contemplation on the five aggregates, and by observing them constantly from moment to moment acquires momentary concentration as an accompaniment of his investigations. This momentary concentration fulfills the same function as the basic *jhāna* of the serenity-vehicle, providing the foundation of mental clarity needed for insight to emerge.

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[1] "Sammāsamādhisampannassa upanisā sampannaṃ hoti yathābhūtañāṇadassanaṃ… sammāsamādhi-vipannassa hatūpanisaṃ hoti yathābhūtañāṇadassanaṃ." AN. 5:4-5.

[2] The seven purifications (*sattavisuddhi*) are discussed in detail in the following section.

The importance of momentary concentration in the vehicle of insight is testified to both by the classical Theravāda exegetical literature and by modern exponents of the "dry *vipassanā*" approach. The *Visuddhimagga*, in its discussion of mindfulness of breathing, states that "at the actual time of insight momentary unification of the mind arises through the penetration of the characteristics (of impermanence, and so on)."[1] Its commentary, the *Paramatthamañjūsā*, defines the phrase "momentary unification of the mind" as concentration lasting only for a moment, stating: "For that too, when it occurs uninterruptedly on its object in a single mode and is not overcome by opposition, fixes the mind immovably, as if in absorption."[2]

The same work contains several other references to momentary concentration. Commenting on Buddhaghosa's remarks that sometimes the path to purification is taught by insight alone, the *Mahā Ṭīkā* points out that this remark is meant to exclude, not all concentration, but only "that concentration with distinction," i.e. access and absorption. It then says: "Taking this stanza [Dhp. v. 277] as the teaching for one whose vehicle is insight does not imply that there is no concentration; for no insight comes about without momentary concentration."[3] A short while later the *Mahā Ṭīkā* again identifies momentary concentration with the type of concentration appropriate to one whose vehicle is insight:

> … supramundane… concentration and insight are impossible without mundane concentration and insight to precede them; for without the access and absorption concentration in one whose vehicle is serenity, or without the momentary concentration in one whose vehicle is insight, and without the Gateways to Liberation…, the supramundane can never in either case be reached.[4]

The commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya, in a passage quoted fully above, states that "someone contemplates with insight the five aggregates of clinging as impermanent, etc. without having produced the aforesaid kinds of serenity."[5] Its subcommentary, clarifying this statement, explains: "The qualification 'without having serenity' is meant to exclude access concentration, not momentary concentration, for no insight is possible without momentary concentration."[1] (Wr. tr.).

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[1] PP., pp. 311-12. "Vipassanākkhaṇe lakkhaṇapaṭivedhena uppajjati khaṇika-cittekaggatā;…" Vism., p. 239.

[2] PP., pp. 311-12 Fn. 63. "Khaṇikacittekaggatā'ti khaṇamattaṭṭhitiko samādhi. So'pi hi ārammaṇe nirantaraṃ ekākārena pavattamāno paṭipakkhena anabhibhūto appito viya cittaṃ niccalaṃ ṭhapeti." Vism.T. 1:342.

[3] PP., p. 2 Fn. 3. "Matta saddena ca visesanivattiatthena savisesaṃ samādhiṃ nivatteti. So upacārappanābhedo vipassanāyānikassa desanāti katvā na samādhi mattaṃ. Na hi khaṇikasamādhiṃ vinā vipassanā sambhavati." Vism.T. 1:11.

[4] PP., p. 3 Fn. 4. "Nānantariyabhāvena panettha lokiyāpi gahitāva honti lokiyasamatha vipassanāya vinā tadabhāvato. Samathayānikassahi upacārappanābhedaṃ samādhiṃ, itarassa khaṇikasamādhiṃ. Ubhayesampi vimokkhamukhattayaṃ vinā na kadācipi lokuttarādhigamo sambhavati." Vism.T. 1:15. For the three gateways to liberation, see below pp. 318-19.

[5] See above, p. 294.

A concise description of the way momentary concentration arises is presented by the Venerable Mahāsī Sayadaw.[2] The Sayadaw explains that a meditator begins the development of insight by attending to the diverse mental and bodily processes that become manifest to him, making the tactile process of the rising and falling of the abdomen his basic object of mindfulness. At first, during the early part of his practice, his mind tends to be distracted by wandering thoughts, but with time his thought-process of noticing becomes well concentrated. When he can notice the objects that appear continuously, undisturbed by hindrances, his practice has arrived at momentary concentration:

> While thus practising the exercise of noticing with 'unhindered mind', the noticing mind will get more close to and fixed at whichever object is noticed, and the act of noticing will proceed without break. At that time there arises in him, in uninterrupted succession, 'the concentration of mind lasting for a moment', directed to each object noticed.[3]

The Sayadaw holds that this momentary concentration claims the place of purification of mind in the dry insight-worker's course of development. He states that though it "has only momentary duration, its power of resistance to being overwhelmed by opposition corresponds to that of access concentration."[4]

Momentary concentration is thus, in contrast to *jhānic* concentration, a fluid type of mental collectedness consisting in the uninterrupted continuity of thoughts engaged in noticing the passing succession of objects. Its objects are varied and changing but its force of concentration remains constant. This force fixes the mind on the object as though fixing it in absorption, holding the hindrances at bay and building up the power of mental purification. For this reason momentary concentration can be understood as implicitly included in access concentration in the standard definitions of purification of mind as consisting in access and absorption.

The Seven Purifications

The path to deliverance, usually expounded in terms of the three trainings in morality, concentration and wisdom, is sometimes divided further into seven stages called the seven purification (*sattavisuddhi*). The canonical basis for this system is the Rathavinīta Sutta (MN. No.24) and the Paṭisambhidāmagga. The scheme claims special prominence in the Theravāda commentarial tradition since it forms the framework for the *Visuddhi-*

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[1] "Samathaṃ anuppādetvāvāti avadhāraṇena upacāra samādhiṃ nivatteti, na khaṇika samādhiṃ; na hi khaṇikasamādhiṃ vinā vipassanā sambhavati." MN.T. 1:204.

[2] PI., pp. 4-5.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 4.

[4] *Ibid.*

magga. As such it comes to the forefront in every discussion of the progressive stages of Buddhist meditation.

According to this scheme in order to attain full liberation the meditator has to pass through seven kinds of purification. The seven are: [1] purification of morality (*sīla visuddhi*); [2] purification of mind (*citta visuddhi*); [3] purification of view (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*); [4] purification by the overcoming of doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa visuddhi*); [5] purification by knowledge and vision of the right and wrong paths (*maggāmaggañāṇadassana visuddhi*); [6] purification by knowledge and vision of the way (*paṭipadāñāṇadassana visuddhi*); and [7] purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana visuddhi*). The *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* recognizes several other sets of terms essential to the development of wisdom – the three characteristics of phenomena, the three contemplations, the ten kinds of insight knowledge, the three liberations, and the three doors to liberation;[1] but since these all come in the scope of the seven purification we can take the latter as the basis for our discussion, mentioning the others when they become relevant.

1. Purification of Morality (sīlavisuddhi)

The purification of morality is identical with the training in the higher moral discipline (*adhisīlasikkhā*). It consists in the fourfold purification of morality already discussed, i.e. restraint according to the rules of the Pātimokkha, restraint of the senses, purity of livelihood, and purity in the use of requisites.[2] This is the foundation for the growth of insight just as much as for the development of serenity.

2. Purification of Mind (citta visuddhi)

Purification of mind coincides with the training in concentration (*samādhi*) or higher consciousness (*adhicittasikkhā*). It is defined as the eight attalnments of absorption together with access concentration. The *samathayānika* yogin accomplishes purification of mind by achieving access or full absorption in one or several *jhānas*, thereby suppressing the five hindrances. The *vipassanāyānika* disciple, as we noted, achieves purification of mind by means of momentary concentration, which as it overcomes the hindrances can be subsumed under access concentration.

3. Purification of view (diṭṭhi visuddhi)

The remaining five purifications pertain to the training in wisdom. The first four belong to the mundane portion of the path or insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), the last to the supramundane portion or the wisdom of the noble path (*magga-ñāṇa*).

Purification of view aims at obtaining a correct perspective on the nature of individual existence. Buddhism teaches that it is the wrong grasp of existence, crystallized in the view of a substantial self, that keeps the unenlightened chained to *saṃsāra*. To reach liberation this delusive view has to be dissolved by purified view, which from the Buddhist standpoint means comprehending the so-called individual as a compound of evanescent material and mental phenomena without any inner core of substance or selfhood. Purification of view is achieved by bringing these phenomena into focus, defining them in terms of their salient characteristics and functions, and using this knowledge to remove the erroneous view of a self-subsistent ego.

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[1] Nārada. *Manual.*, pp. 408-409, 411-12.

[2] See above, Ch. II, pp. 28-36.

The *samathayānika* and *vipassanāyānika* approach this purification from different angles, though the end result is the same for both. The former, after emerging from any fine material or immaterial *jhāna* except the last (which is too subtle for analysis), discerns its *jhāna* factors and their concomitants in the light of their specific characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes. He then defines all these states as "mentality" (*nāma*). He next discerns the physical basis for these mental phenomena, the matter of the heart (*hadayarūpa*),[1] as well as the remaining primary and secondary kinds of material phenomena. These he groups together under the heading of "materiality" (*rūpa*). He thus perceives the living being as a composite of mentality and materiality, *nāmarūpa*, without an over-ruling self hidden within or behind it.

The *vipassanāyānika* begins to purify his view by analyzing the body into the four primary elements – solidity, fluidity, heat, and oscillation. After defining these in terms of their characteristics, he repeats the procedure for the other material phenomena, defining them all as materiality. He then turns to the states of consciousness and their principal concomitants, defining them and grouping them under the heading of "mentality." Thus, like the first kind of yogin, he eventually arrives at the realization that the living being is merely a compound of mutually supporting mental and physical phenomena apart from which there is no separate entity to be identified as a "self," "being," or "person."

The process of analysis can be undertaken using as basis the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases (the six sense faculties including mind and their six respective objects), the eighteen elements (six objects, six faculties, and six consciousnesses), or any other mode of classification. In the end all are defined in terms of mentality and materiality, resulting in the removal of the view of a self-identical ego.

4. Purification by Overcoming Doubt (kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhi)

Once the disciple has overcome the false view of a self by discerning the living being as a compound of material and mental phenomena, he next sets out to overcome doubts concerning this compound by investigating the causes and conditions for mentality-materiality. He understands that the mind-body combination is neither causeless nor created by any single cause but arises due to a multiplicity of causes and conditions. He first seeks out the causes and conditions for the body and discovers that the body is brought into being by four causes operating from the past – ignorance, craving, clinging, and *kamma* – and sustained in the present by nutriment as its primary present condition. He then turns his attention to mentality, and finds that all mental phenomena come into being in dependence on conditions, such as sense organs, sense objects, and conascent mental factors, as well as through the defilements and *kamma* accumulated in the past. When he sees that the present occurrence of mentality-materiality is due to causes and conditions, he infers that the same principle applied to its occurrence in the past and will apply to its occurrence in the future. In this way he overcomes all doubt and uncertainty regarding the conditioned origination of mind and matter in the three periods of time.

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[1] The ancient Indian physiology, accepted by the Buddhist commentarial tradition, identified the heart with the seat of consciousness. In the canonical texts no such identification is made. Reference is only made to "that matter in dependence on which mind and mind-consciousness occur." See Narada, *Manual*., pp. 292-93.

By discerning the conditional basis for the mental-material compound, the yogin arrives at the realization that the course of existence is merely a succession of active *kammic* processes and passive resultant processes. The aggregates occurring in the past ceased immediately after arising but gave rise to aggregates occurring in the present. The aggregates occurring now will cease in the present and give rise to aggregates occurring in the future. There is nothing permanent passing through this succession. It is merely a sequence of phenomena acting and experiencing without an agent over and above the actions or a subject over and above the experiences.

5. Purification by Knowledge and Vision into the Right and Wrong Paths (maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhi)

Before the next purification can arise several intermediate steps are necessary. Firstly, after dispelling his doubts by the knowledge of conditionality, the disciple undertakes the form of insight called “comprehension by groups” (*kalāpasammasana*). Comprehension by groups involves collecting all phenomena into distinct categories and defining them in terms of the three characteristics. Thus the disciple contemplates all material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness as impermanent, all as suffering, and all as not self, each being a separate comprehension.

As the Paṭisambhidāmagga states:

> Any materiality whatever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near – he defines all materiality as impermanent: this is one kind of comprehension. He defines it as painful: this is one kind of comprehension. He defines it as not self: this is one kind of comprehension. Any feeling whatever,… Any perception whatever,… Any formations whatever,… Any consciousness whatever,… – he defines all consciousness as impermanent:… He defines it as not self.[1]

This same method of comprehension can be applied not only to the five aggregates but to any categorical scheme for classifying the constituents of experience – the six sense doors, the six objects, the six kinds of consciousness, six contacts, six feelings, six perceptions, six volitions, the twelve sense bases, the eighteen elements, etc. The four *jhānas*, four divine abidings (*brahmavihāras*), and four immaterial attainments are also included. Since the text advises a beginner to develop comprehension by contemplating those states that are readily discernible by him, a *samathayānika* yogin will generally choose as his object of comprehension a *jhāna* he has achieved and mastered; this becomes his *sammasitajjhāna*, as we explained above.

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[1] PP., 706. “Yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgata paccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ rūpaṃ aniccato vavattheti ekaṃ sammasanaṃ, dukkhato vavattheti ekaṃ sammasanaṃ, anattato vavattheti ekaṃ sammsanaṃ. Yā kañci vedanā… yā kañci sañña… ye keci saṅkhārā… yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ aniccato vavattheti ekaṃ sammasanaṃ, dukkhato vavattheti, ekaṃ sammasanaṃ, anattato vavattheti, ekaṃ sammasanaṃ.” Pts., p. 51.

Whatever objects he selects as material for comprehension, the disciple must understand the precise way they embody the three characteristics. Firstly, they are all impermanent in the sense that they are subject to destruction (*khayaṭṭhena*). Nothing that comes into being is able to last forever, but whatever arises is bound to eventually pass away. Secondly, they are all suffering in the sense of being fearful (*bhayaṭṭhena*). Since all composite phenomena are impermanent they cannot provide any lasting contentment or security, but when held to with clinging are a potential source of suffering to be regarded as harmful and fearful. And thirdly, they are all selfless in the sense of being coreless (*asāraṭṭhena*). Composite phenomena, being compounded by conditions, lack any inner essence that can be conceived as a self, inner agent or subject, and thus are empty of a core.[1]

When the meditator succeeds in comprehending the various groups in terms of the three characteristics, he acquires comprehension-knowledge, *sammasañāṇana*. This marks the actual beginning of insight. According to the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* comprehension knowledge is the first of the ten kinds of insight-knowledge through which a *vipassanā*-practitioner has to pass.[2]

From comprehension-knowledge the disciple passes on to knowledge of contemplation of rise and fall (*udayabbayānupassanāñāṇa*). This knowledge, defined simply as "understanding of contemplating present states, change,"[3] is gained by contemplating the presently existent five aggregates as characterized by rise and fall. In brief, it arises by seeing the rise of the aggregates in their characteristic of generation, birth, or arising, and their fall in their characteristic of change, destruction, or dissolution. In greater detail, it involves perceiving the arising of each aggregate through its specific conditions and its cessation through the cessation of these conditions. Focussing in more closely on the present process, the meditator realizes that present phenomena, not having been, are brought into being, and that having been they immediately vanish. Formations appear to him as instantaneous, coming into being and passing away with inconceivable rapidity, perpetually renewed.[4]

When he gains this initial understanding of rise and fall the meditator has arrived at tender insight (*taruṇavipassanā*). At this point, as a result of his successful practice, ten unprecedented experiences are likely to arise in him. Because they can impede his

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1. PP., pp. 709-710. Vism., p. 523.

2. Narada, *Manual.*, pp. 409, 411.

3. PP., p. 734. Pts., pp. 53-54.

4. PP., pp. 736-38. Vism., pp. 542-43.

progress, these are called the ten imperfections of insight (*vipasanūpakkilesā*). The ten are: illumination, knowledge, rapture, tranquility, happiness, resolution, exertion, mindfulness, equanimity, and attachment.[1] If he is not cautious the unwary meditator can misinterpret these occurrences and think that he has reached one of the stages of enlightenment. Therefore novice yogins are advised not to allow themselves to be deterred by such occurrences but to recognize them for what they are: by-products of insight which can become impediments if wrongly adhered to. The skilled meditator contemplates them as bare phenomena – impermanent, suffering, and selfless. He distinguishes the right path from the wrong, realizing that these ten states are not the path but distractions; insight-knowledge free from imperfections is the path. The knowledge that is established in him by making this distinction is the purification by knowledge and vision into the right and wrong paths.

6. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way (paṭipadāñāṇadassana visuddhi)

Having relinquished attachment to the ten imperfections of insight and correctly distinguished the true path from the false, the disciple now enters upon a steady progression of insights which will lead him through increasingly deeper levels of understanding right up to the threshold of the supramundane path. These insights, nine in number, begin with mature knowledge of rise and fall and culminate in conformity knowledge (*anulomañāṇa*), the pinnacle of mundane insight. Together with the previously accomplished comprehension-knowledge (*sammasanañāṇa*), these nine insights complete the ten kinds of insight-knowledge mentioned in the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*.

Knowledge of contemplation of rise and fall (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*)

After distinguishing the right path from the wrong the meditator resumes the contemplation of rise and fall. Though he had previously cultivated this knowledge in part, his contemplation was disabled by the imperfections of insight and could not clearly observe the three characteristics. But now that the imperfections have been removed contemplation becomes extremely sharp, causing the three characteristics to stand out in bold relief. By attending to the rise and fall of formations the yogin sees the mark of impermanence – formations changing constantly at every moment, produced and stopped with inconceivable rapidity. As impermanence becomes more conspicuous suffering begins to stand out in its fundamental form, as continuous oppression by rise and fall. The yogin then realizes that whatever changes and causes suffering is insusceptible to the exercise of mastery, hence incapable of being identified as a self or the belongings of a self; this brings the understanding of the mark of selflessness into view. Having uncovered the three characteristics, the meditator sees that the so-called being is nothing but a becoming, a flux of evanescent, painful, impersonal happenings which does not remain the same for two consecutive moments.

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[1] PP., pp. 739ff. "Obhāsa, ñāṇa, pīti, passaddhi, sukha, adhimokkha, paggaha, upaṭṭhāna, upekkhā, nikanti." Vism., pp. 544-45.

Knowledge of contemplation of dissolution (*bhangānupassanā-ñāṇa*)

As the meditator persists in his contemplation of rise and fall, it becomes increasingly apparent that conditioned formations undergo three phases of becoming: a phase of arising (*uppāda*), a phase of presence (*ṭhiti*), and a phase of dissolution (*bhaṅga*). When he can discern these phases clearly, the yogin no longer extends his mindfulness to their arising or presence, but focusses exclusively upon the final phase – their momentary cessation, dissolution, or breaking up. He then sees how formations break up all the time "like fragile pottery being smashed, like fine dust being dispersed, like sesamum seeds being roasted."[1] Applying his direct knowledge of present dissolution to the past and future, he draws the inference that all past formations dissolved and all future ones will dissolve. Since dissolution is the culminating point of impermanence, the most salient aspect of suffering, and the strongest negation of selfhood, the three marks stand forth more distinctly than ever before. The whole field of formations thus becomes evident to contemplation as impermanent, suffering, and selfless. With the insight that formations break up constantly without a pause, and that this ceaseless process of momentary dissolution holds sway over the three periods of time, the meditator arrives at knowledge of contemplation of dissolution.

Knowledge of appearance as terror (*bhayatūpaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*)

As he repeats and cultivates his insight into the destruction, fall, and breakup of formations,

> formations classed according to all kinds of becoming, generation, destiny, station, or abode of beings, appear to him in the form of a great terror, as lions, tigers, leopards,… appear to a timid man who wants to live in peace.[2]

When he sees how past formations have ceased, present ones are ceasing, and future ones will cease, there arises in him knowledge of appearance as terror, born of the understanding that whatever is bound for destruction cannot be relied upon and is therefore fearful.

Knowledge of contemplation of danger (*ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa*)

The next stage of insight-knowledge arises naturally out of the previous one. As the meditator cultivates the knowledge of appearance as terror he finds that there is no shelter, protection, or refuge in any kind of becoming. He sees that since there is no shelter in any state of existence there is not a single formation he can pin his hopes on: all hold nothing but danger. Then "the three kinds of becoming appear like charcoal pits full of glowing coals,… and all formations appear as a huge mass of dangers destitute of satisfaction or substance."[3] The meditator discerns the potential danger in all existence just as a timid man sees the danger in a delightful forest thicket infested with wild beasts.[1]

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[1] PP., p. 752. Vism., p. 553.

[2] PP., p. 753. Vism., pp. 554-55.

[3] PP., p. 755. Vism., p. 556.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga explains how the knowledge of appearance as terror (or the knowledge of the presence of fear) becomes the knowledge of danger thus:

> Birth is fear – thus understanding in the presence of fear becomes knowledge of danger. Existence is fear… decay is fear… sickness is fear… death is fear… sorrow is fear… lamentation is fear… despair is fear, thus understanding in the presence of fear is knowledge of danger.[2]

Danger arises out of fearful conditions and fearful conditions give rise to danger. Birth, existence, decay, etc., being fearful states threaten danger to those exposed to them. For a meditator who perceives the dangers in all these fearful conditions, the knowledge of appearance as terror becomes transformed into the knowledge of contemplation of danger.

Knowledge of contemplation of dispassion (*nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa*)

Seeing the danger in all compounded things the meditator becomes dispassionate towards them. He finds no delight in any state of worldly existence but turns away from them all. Even before he came to this knowledge the meditator had reduced his gross attachments but now, having seen the fear and danger in formations, he gains dispassion towards the five aggregates on account of their impermanent, fearful, and insecure nature. It should be noted that according to the Paṭisambhidāmagga these last three insights – knowledge of terror, of danger, and of dispassion – represent phases of one kind of insight-knowledge apprehending its object in three different ways.[3]

Knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*)

When the meditator becomes dispassionate towards the formations in all the kinds of becoming, his mind no longer cleaves to them. The desire then arises in him to get rid of formations, to be released and liberated from them all. The knowledge that arises in association with this desire is knowledge of desire for deliverance.

Knowledge of contemplation of reflection (*paṭisaṅkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*)

In order to be released from the whole field of conditioned phenomena the meditator returns to the contemplation of formations, examining them again and again in terms of impermanence, suffering and selflessness. Looking at them from a variety of angles in the light of the three characteristics, he sees formations as impermanent because they are non-continuous, temporary, limited by rise and fall, disintegrating, perishable, subject to change, etc.; as suffering because they are continuously oppressed, hard to bear, the basis of pain, a disease, a tumor, a dart, a calamity, an affliction, etc.; as not self because they are alien, empty, vain, void, ownerless, without an overlord, with none to wield power over them, etc.[1] This extended understanding of the three characteristics is the knowledge of contemplation of reflection.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] BMTP., p. 377. "Uppādo bhayanti bhayatūpaṭṭhāne paññā ādīnave ñāṇaṃ. Pavattiṃ bhayanti… jarā bhayanti… byādhi bhayanti… maraṇaṃ bhayanti… soko bhayanti… paridevo bhayanti… upāyāso bhayanti, bhayatūpaṭṭhāne paññā ādīnave ñāṇaṃ." Pts., p. 377. SN. 4:173-75.

[3] Pts., p. 259.

Knowledge of equanimity about formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*)

To deepen his understanding of selflessness the meditator contemplates voidness (*suññatā*) in various ways. He sees that all compounds are empty of self or of anything belonging to a self, that nothing can be identified as "I" or as the property of an "I", as an "other" or as the property of an "other".[2] Perceiving the voidness of selfhood in formations, the meditator abandons both terror and attachment. He develops instead a sense of detached equanimity:

> This [meditator], wanting to get free from all formations, discerns formations by the contemplation of reflection; then, seeing nothing to be taken as 'I' or 'mine', he abandons both terror and delight and becomes indifferent and neutral towards all formations.[3]

With the arising of this knowledge the disciple's mind retreats, retracts, and recoils from all the planes of becoming and no longer goes out to them "just as a fowl's feather or a shred of sinew thrown on a fire retreats, retracts, and recoils, and does not spread out."[4] At this stage, if contemplation should perceive *nibbāna*, the meditator's goal, then it will reject formations and focus on *nibbāna*. But if it does not see *nibbāna* the meditator will continue in the knowledge of equanimity about formations until his contemplation acquires further maturity.

When the meditator's knowledge ripens and the move to the supramundane path becomes imminent, insight tends to settle down in one of the three contemplations – on impermanence, suffering, or selflessness – as determined by the meditator's disposition. Because they lead directly to the liberating experience of the noble path, these contemplations, at the pinnacle of insight, are called the three gateways to liberation (*tīṇi vimokkhamukhāni*). The contemplation of impermanence becomes the gateway to the signless liberation (*animitta vimokkha*) for it directs the mind to *nibbāna* as the signless element; the contemplation of suffering becomes the gateway to the desireless liberation (*appaṇihitavimokkha*) for it directs the mind to *nibbāna* as the desireless element; and the contemplation of non-self becomes the gateway to the void liberation (*suññatavimokkha*) for it directs the mind to *nibbāna* as the void element.

The liberation to which these contemplations are gateways is the supramundane path. Though one in essence the path gains three names according to the aspect of *nibbāna* it focusses upon. As Buddhaghosa explains:

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[1] PP., p. 760. Vism., p. 559.

[2] PP., pp. 762-63. Vism., p. 561. SN. 3:167.

[3] PP., p. 765. Vism., p. 563.

[4] PP., p. 766. Vism., p. 564.

> And here the signless liberation should be understood as the noble path that has occurred by making nibbana its object through the signless aspect. For that path is signless owing to the signless element having arisen, and it is a liberation owing to deliverance from defilements. In the same way the path that has occurred by making nibbana its object through the desireless aspect is desireless. And the path that has occurred by making nibbana its object through the void aspect is void.[1]

The factor that determines which particular "gateway" will be entered and which liberation attained is the spiritual faculty predominant in the meditator's mental makeup. One with strong faith (*saddhā*) tends to settle down in contemplation of impermanence, one with strong concentration (*samādhi*) in the contemplation of suffering, and one with strong wisdom (*paññā*) in the contemplation of selflessness; thereby they each attain the path of liberation corresponding to their specific contemplation. As it is said in the Paṭisambhidāmagga:

> When one who has great resolution brings [formations] to mind as impermanent, he acquires the signless liberation. When one who has great tranquility brings [them] to mind as painful, he acquires the desireless liberation. When one who has great wisdom brings [them] to mind as not-self, he acquires the void liberation.[2]

Insight-knowledge that has reached its climax and is about to issue in the supramundane path is also known by another name, "insight leading to emergence" (*vuṭṭhānagāminī-vipassanā*).[3] This name covers three kinds of knowledge: fully matured equanimity about formations and the two that follow it – conformity knowledge (*anuloma ñāṇa*) and change-of-lineage knowledge (*gotrabhū ñāṇa*). The word "emergence" (*vuṭṭhāna*) signifies the supramundane path, which is called thus because externally it rises up from formations to apprehend *nibbāna* and internally it rises up from defilements and the aggregates consequent upon them to a state of complete purity. Since these last three kinds of mundane knowledge lead immediately to the path they are collectively named insight leading to emergence.

Conformity knowledge (*anuloma-ñāṇa*)

As the meditator cultivates equanimity about formations his faculties grow stronger and sharper. Then, at a certain point, the realization dawns that the path is about to arise. A thought-process of equanimity-knowledge occurs comprehending formations through one of the three characteristics – as either impermanent, or suffering, or selfless; the mind then sinks into the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*). Following the life continuum there arises in the stream of consciousness a mind-door adverting (*manodvārāvajjana*) apprehending formations as impermanent, or suffering, or selfless, in accordance with the previous process of equanimity-knowledge. Immediately after the adverting two or three impulsions occur making formations their object in terms of the same characteristic. The three are individually called "preliminary work" (*parikamma*), "access" (*upacāra*), and "conformity" (*anuloma*), but they are most commonly collected under the group name "conformity." In very quick-witted meditators the moment of preliminary work is passed over and only the two moments of access and conformity occur. Conformity knowledge receives its name because it conforms to the functions of truth in the eight kinds of insight-knowledge preceding it and in the thirty-seven states partaking of enlightenment to follow.[1] It is the last moment of insight-knowledge before the change over to the supramundane path supervenes.

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[1] PP., p. 768. "Ettha ca, animittavimokkho ti animittākārena nibbānaṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā pavatto ariyamaggo. So hi animittāya dhātuyā uppannattā animitto, kilesehi ca vimuttattā vimokkho. Eten'eva nayena appaṇihitākārena nibbānaṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā pavatto appaṇihito, suññatākārena nibbānaṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā pavatto suññato ti veditabbo." Vism., p. 565.

[2] PP., p. 768. "Aniccato manasikaronto adhimokkhabahulo animittavimokkhaṃ paṭilabhati. Dukkhato manasikaronto passaddhibahulo appaṇihitavimokkhaṃ paṭilabhati. Anattato manasikaronto vedabahulo suññatavimokkhaṃ paṭilabhati." Pts., p. 254.

[3] PP., pp. 772-75. Vism., pp. 567-69.

7. Purification by Knowledge and Vision (ñāṇadassanavisuddhi)

Change-of lineage (*gotrabhū*)

The last purification, purification by knowledge and vision, consists of the knowledge of the four supramundane paths – the path of stream-entry, the path of the once-returner, the path of the non-returner, and the path of arahatship. However, immediately after conformity knowledge and before the moment of the first path, there occurs one thought-moment called change-of-lineage knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*). This knowledge has the function of adverting to the path. Because it occupies an intermediate position it belongs neither to purification by knowledge and vision of the way nor to purification by knowledge and vision, but is regarded as unassignable. It receives the name "change-of-lineage" because by reaching this stage of knowledge the meditator "passes out of the lineage, the category, the plane, of the ordinary man (*puthujjana*) and enters the lineage, the category, the plane, of the Noble Ones."[2] In bringing about such a radical transformation change-of-lineage is clearly a most important and crucial moment of spiritual development.

The three kinds of conformity knowledge – preliminary work, access, and conformity proper – dispel the "murk of defilements" that conceal the Four Noble Truths. Each of the three clears away a degree of delusion, permitting the truths to become more and more manifest. When the meditator reaches conformity knowledge nothing more needs to be done as preparation for the attainment of the first path. By arousing the insights ending in conformity he has completed whatever he had to do. At this point his mind no longer holds to any formation, but turns away from the entire field of formations as all conditioned phenomena appear to him to be impediments. However, though conformity-knowledge dispels the delusion that conceals the truths, it cannot penetrate the truths. For the truths to be penetrated *nibbāna* must be realized as object. Change-of-lineage knowledge, which arises right after conformity, is the first state of consciousness to make *nibbāna* its object. It is the initial advertance to *nibbāna*, functioning as the proximate, immediate and decisive-support condition for the arising of the first path.

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[1] PP., pp. 782-83. Vism., pp. 575-76.

[2] PP., p. 785. "Puthujjanagottaṃ puthujjanasaṅkhaṃ puthujjanabhūmiṃ atikkamamānaṃ, ariyagottaṃ ariyasaṅkhaṃ ariyabhūmiṃ okkamamānaṃ." Vism., p. 577.

The first path and fruit

Change-of-lineage knowledge perceives *nibbāna* but cannot destroy the defilements. The eradication of defilements is the work of the four supramundane paths (*lokuttaramagga*). Each path attainment is a momentary experience apprehending *nibbāna*, understanding the Four Noble Truths, and cutting off certain defilements. The first path, as Buddhaghosa explains, arises in immediate succession to change-of-lineage:

> …After, as it were, giving a sign to the path to come into being it [change-of-lineage] ceases. And without pausing after the sign given by that change-of-lineage knowledge the path follows upon it in uninterrupted continuity, and as it comes into being it pierces and explodes the mass of greed, the mass of hatred, and the mass of delusion, never pierced and exploded before.[1]

The first path is called the path of stream entry (*sotāpattimagga*) since the disciple who has reached this path has entered the stream of the Dhamma (*dhammasota*), the Noble Eightfold Path, which will take him to *nibbāna* as surely as the waters in a stream will be carried to the ocean.[2] On entering this path he has passed beyond the level of a worldling (*puthujjana*) and become a noble one, an ariyan, who has seen and understood the Dhamma for himself. The path gives him real experience of the seven noble treasures: faith, virtue, conscience, shame, learning, generosity, and wisdom.[3] With the attainment of the path he acquires the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, abandons the eightfold wrong path, and is on the way to becoming a breast-born son of the Buddha.[4]

As the passage cited above makes clear, when the path-knowledge arises it breaks through the mass of greed, hatred, and delusion, the root-defilements which drive living beings from birth to birth in beginningless *saṃsāra*. Each supramundane path has the special function of eradicating defilements. The defilements cut off by the successive paths are classified into a set of ten "fetters" (*saṃyojana*), so called because they keep beings chained to the round of existence. The ten fetters, which all arise out of the three unwholesome roots, are: [1] wrong views of personality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), [2] doubt (*vicikicchā*), [3] clinging to rites and rituals (*sīlabbata parāmāsa*), [4] sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), [5] ill will (*vyāpāda*), [6] lust for fine material existence (*rūparāga*), [7] lust for immaterial existence (*arūparāga*), [8] conceit (*māna*), [9] restlessness (*uddhacca*), and [10] ignorance (*avijjā*). The ten are divided into two groups: the first five are called the fetters pertaining to the lower worlds (*orambhāgiyāni samyojanāni*) because they keep beings tied to the sensuous realms; the last five are called the fetters pertaining to the higher worlds (*uddhambhāgiyāni samyojanāni*) because they remain operative even in the fine material and immaterial realms.[1] Some of these fetters – doubt, sensual desire, ill will, and restlessness – are identical in nature with the five hindrances abandoned by *jhāna*. But whereas mundane *jhāna* only suppresses the manifest eruptions of these defilements, leaving the latent tendencies untouched, the supramundane paths cut them off at the root. With attainment of the fourth path the last and subtlest of the fetters are eradicated. Thus the arahat, the fully liberated one, is described as "one who has eliminated the fetters of existence" (*parikkhīṇabhavasaṃyojana*).[2]

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[1] PP., pp. 787-88. "…Evaṃ nibbattahi ti maggassa saññaṃ datvā viya nirujjhati. Maggo pi tena dinnasaññaṃ amuñcitvā va avīcisantativasena taṃ ñāṇaṃ anubandhamāno anibbiddhapubbaṃ apadālitapubbaṃ lobhakkhandhaṃ dosakkhandhaṃ mohakkhandhaṃ nibbijjhamāno vā padālayamāno vā nibbattati." Vism., p. 579.

[2] SN. 5:347.

[3] "Saddhā, sīla, hiri, ottappa, suta, cāga, paññā." DN. 3:251.

[4] SN. 2:221.

The path of stream-entry eradicates the first three fetters – the fetters of false views of personality, doubt, and clinging to rites and rituals. The first is the view that the five aggregates can be identified with a self or can be seen as containing, contained in, or belonging to a self.[3] The more theoretical forms of this view are attenuated by insight-knowledge into impermanence, suffering, and selflessness, but the subtle latent holding to such views can only be destroyed by path-knowledge. "Doubt" is uncertainty with regard to the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, and the training; it is eliminated when the disciple sees for himself the truth of the Dhamma.[4] "Clinging to rites and rituals" is the belief that liberation from suffering can be obtained merely by observing rites and rituals. Having followed the path to its climax, the disciple understands that the Noble Eightfold Path is the one way to the end of suffering, and so can no more fall back on rites and rituals. The path of stream entry not only cuts off these fetters but also eliminates greed for sense pleasures and resentment that would be strong enough to lead to states of loss, i.e. to rebirth in the four lower realms of the hells, tormented spirits, animals, and titans.[5] For this reason the stream-enterer is released from the possibility of an unfortunate rebirth.[6]

The path of stream-entry is followed by another occasion of supramundane experience called the fruit of stream entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Fruition follows immediately upon the path, succeeding it without a gap. It occurs as the result of the path, sharing its object, *nibbāna*, and its world-transcending character. But whereas the path performs the active and demanding function of cutting off defilements, the fruit simply enjoys the bliss and peace that result from the path's completion of its function. Also, whereas the path is limited to only a single moment of consciousness, fruition covers either two or three moments. In the case of a quick-witted meditator who passes over the moment of preliminary work the cognitive process of the path contains only two moments of conformity knowledge. Thus in his thought-process, immediately after the path has arisen and ceased, three moments of fruition occur. In the case of an ordinary meditator there will be three moments of conformity knowledge and thus, after the path, only two moments of fruition.

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[1] AN. 5:17.

[2] MN. 1:4.

[3] MN. 1:300.

[4] MN. 1:101.

[5] Dhs., p. 208.

[6] PP., p. 801. Vism., p. 588.

The three moments of conformity knowledge and the moment of change-of-lineage are wholesome states of consciousness pertaining to the sense sphere (*kāmāvacarakusala-citta*). The path consciousness and the fruition that follows it are supramundane states of consciousness (*lokuttara citta*), the former wholesome (*kusala*) and the latter resultant (*vipāka*). The path and fruit necessarily occur at the level of one of the *jhānas* – from the first to the fourth *jhāna* in the fourfold scheme, from the first to the fifth in the fivefold scheme. They partake of the character of *jhāna* because they contain the *jhāna*-factors endowed with an intensity of absorption corresponding to that of the fine material sphere *jhānas*. But unlike the mundane *jhānas* these *jhānas* of the path and fruit are supramundane, having an altogether different object and function than their counterparts, as we will see in the next chapter.

The following diagram illustrates the thought-process of the path and fruit of stream-entry in the case of a normal meditator with three moments of conformity preceding the path and two moments of fruition succeeding it:

A									B							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…
bh	l	ch	d	p	u	a	g	m	ph	ph	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh	bh

Here line *A* represents the four thought-moments preceding the path process. This comprises the past *bhavaṅga* or life-continuum (*bh*), its vibration (*l*), its cutting off (*ch*), and the mind's advertance to formations as impermanent, suffering, or selfless through the mind-door (*d*). Line *B* represents the lapsing of the mind back into the passive life-continuum after the fruition phase is over. *P* represents the moment of preliminary work (*parikamma*), *u* the moment of access (*upacāra*), *a* the moment of conformity (*anuloma*), and *g* the moment of change-of-lineage (*gotrabhū*) where the ordinary stream of consciousness belonging to the sensual plane changes over to the lineage of the noble path. The following *m* represents the noble path consciousness (*magga citta*). After this there are two *ph*'s representing the fruit of stream-entry, then the mind relapses into the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*) which is represented by *bh* repeated six times. The groups of three dots in each *citta* represent the birth (*uppāda*), transformation or duration (*ṭhiti*), and dissolution (*bhaṅga*) of each thought moment.[1]

It is evident from this diagram that the noble path consciousness is limited to only a single conscious moment. Immediately after this moment ceases it yields to its fruition moment. The diagram also shows the two distinct thought-moments of path and fruit linked directly together for the reason that it is impossible to have the thought-moment of the stream-entry path without the fruit following in immediate succession. After two thought-moments of fruition the mental process returns to the life continuum.

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[1] Adopted from *Nārada*, *Manual*., pp. 214-19. Vism., pp. 111-12. *Compendium*. pp. 54-55.

After the attainment of fruition the stream-enterer reviews the path, fruition, and *nibbāna*. He will generally also review the defilements he has destroyed by the path and the defilements remaining to be destroyed by the higher paths; this, however, is not invariably fixed and is sometimes omitted by some meditators. The ariyan disciples who have passed through the next two fruitions will likewise review their attainments in the same way. Thus for each there will be at a minimum three and at a maximum five items to be reviewed.[1] For the arahat, however, there will be a maximum of four since he has no more defilements to be eliminated. In this way there are a maximum of nineteen kinds of reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa*) following the supramundane attainments.[2]

The disciple at the moment of the path of stream-entry is called "one standing on the path of stream-entry" or the first noble person; from the moment of fruition up to the attainment of the next path he is called a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), reckoned as the second noble person. Though conventionally the person standing on the path and the one abiding in the fruit can be described as one and the same individual at two different moments, the philosophical perspective requires another kind of descriptive device. From the standpoint of ultimate truth, according to Buddhism, an individual endures as such for only one thought-moment. Therefore, in classifying the types of noble persons, the Buddha drew upon the distinction between the thought-moments of path and fruition as the basis for a distinction between two types of noble persons. This bifurcation applies to each of the four stages of deliverance: for each, the individual at the path-moment is reckoned as one type of noble person, the same individual from the moment of fruition on as another type of noble person.

The texts extoll the stream-enterer as acquiring incalculable benefits as a result of his attainment. He has closed off the doors to rebirth in the woeful states of existence and can declare of himself:

> Destroyed for me is rebirth in the hells, in the animal kingdom, in the spirit realm, in the planes of misery, the bad destinations, the downfall. I am a stream-enterer, no longer subject to decline, assured of and destined for full enlightenment.[3] (Wr. tr.).

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[1] Nārada, *Manual*, p. 410. Vism., p. 581.

[2] Anuruddha, *Abhidharmartha Saṅgrahaya*, Translated [into Sinhalese] by Sariputra Sangharāja Mahāthera. Revised and edited by the Very Rev. Pannamoli Tissa Thera. 2d ed. (Randombe, Ceylon: W. E. De Silva, Hetumuni Semaneris De Silva and R. C. P. Weerasuriya Waidyaratna, 1916), p. 249. Sumangala, [*Vibhāvani Ṭīkā*] *Anuruddhācariya's Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha with Abhidhammattha Vibhāvaniṭīkā*, revised and edited by Bhadanta Revatadhammatthera. [Pāli Text in Devanagari script]. (Vārānasi, India: Bauddha Svādhyāya Sātrā, 1965), pp. 157-58 (hereafter cited as *Vibhāvani Ṭīkā*).

[3] "Khīṇanirayomhi khīṇatiracchānayoniyo khīṇapettivisayo khīṇāpāyaduggativinipāto; sotāpanno'haṃ asmi avinipātadhammo niyato sambodhiparāyano." SN. 2:68.

He can be certain that he is released from five kinds of fear and hostility: the fear and hostility that come from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from taking intoxicants.[1] He is endowed with the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpattiyaṅgāni*); unwavering confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, and unblemished moral discipline.[2] He has penetrated and seen the truth with correct understanding.[3] By so penetrating the truth he has limited his future births to a maximum of seven in the happy realms of the human and heaven worlds, drying up the great ocean of suffering that laid beyond this.[4] Thus the Buddha says that for the stream-enterer who has seen the Dhamma the amount of suffering that remains is like a pinch of dust on the finger nail, while the suffering that has been exhausted is like the dust on the mighty earth.[5]

The second path and fruit

A disciple who has attained to stream-entry is not debarred from progressing to higher stages of deliverance in that same life, but can advance all the way to arahatship if he has sufficient supporting conditions and puts forth the necessary effort. Therefore the yogin abiding at the stage of stream-entry is advised to strive for the next higher path, the path of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmimagga*), either in the same session or at a later time. He should stir up the spiritual faculties, the powers, and the factors of enlightenment, and with this equipment contemplate the whole range of formations included in the five aggregates in the light of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. As before he again passes through the progressive series of insights beginning with knowledge of rise and fall and culminating in knowledge of equanimity about formations. If his faculties have not yet reached sufficient maturity his contemplation will remain in equanimity about formations. But if and when his faculties mature, he passes through the moments of conformity-knowledge and change-of-lineage knowledge and attains to the second noble path, the path of the once-returner.[6]

Unlike the other noble paths, the second path does not eradicate any fetters completely. However, when it arises it attenuates sensual desire and ill will to such a degree that they no longer occur strongly or frequently but remain only as weak residues. The three unwholesome roots are weakened along with the other fetters derived from them. Following the path-consciousness in immediate succession come two or three moments of the fruit of the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi-phala*), the inevitable consequence of the path. After fruition reviewing knowledge occurs, as described. The meditator at the moment of the path is known as the third noble person, from the moment of the fruit on as a once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), the fourth noble person. He is called a "once-returner" because, if he does not go further in this life, he is bound to make an end of suffering after returning to this world one more time. The standard sutta description reads:

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[1] *Ibid*. 69.

[2] *Ibid*. 70

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] Stream-enterers are divided into three kinds: assuming that they will not go further in that same lifetime, one with sluggish faculties will be reborn seven times in the happy destinations; one with medium faculties will be reborn an intermediary number of times; and one with keen faculties will be reborn once more in the human world and there make an end of suffering. (See PP., pp. 833-34. Vism., pp. 611-12).

[5] SN. 2:133-34.

[6] The thought-moment immediately preceding the three higher paths only receives the name "change-of-lineage" figuratively, due to its similarity to the moment preceding the path of stream-entry. The yogi actually crossed over to the noble one's lineage (*ariyagotta*) earlier, with the moment before the first path. Hence the moment immediately preceding the three higher paths is technically known by another name, *vodāna*, meaning "cleansing", so called "because it purifies from certain defilements and because it makes absolute purification (i.e. *nibbāna*) its object." (Wr. tr.). "Ekaccasamkilesavisuddhiyā, pana accantavisuddhiyā ārammaṇakaraṇato ca vodānanti vuccati." Vism.T. 2:487-88.

> "After the vanishing of the (first) three fetters and the attenuation of greed, hate, and delusion, the monk 'returns only once more' to this world. And only once more returning to this world, he puts an end to suffering."[1]

The third path and fruit

As before, the ardent meditator resumes contemplation on the impermanence, suffering, and selflessness of the aggregates, striving to attain the third stage of deliverance, the stage of a non-returner (*anāgāmi*). When his faculties mature he passes through the preliminary insights and reaches the third path, the path of the non-returner (*anāgāmimagga*). This path destroys sensual desire and ill will, the two fetters weakened by the second path. Immediately after the third path its fruition occurs, after which he reviews his position as before. At the moment of the path the yogin is known as one standing on the path of a non-returner, the fifth noble person, from the moment of fruition on as a non-returner, the sixth noble person. He is called a non-returner because he no longer returns to the sensuous realm. If he does not penetrate further he is reborn spontaneously in some higher realm, generally in the pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) of the fine material sphere, and there reaches final *nibbāna*: "After the vanishing of the five lower fetters, however, the monk appears in a higher world, and there he reaches *nibbāna*, 'no more returning' from that world.[2]

The fourth path and fruit

Again, either in the same session or at some future time, the meditator sharpens his faculties, powers, and enlightenment factors, contemplating the three characteristics of formations. He ascends through the series of insights up to equanimity about formations. When his faculties mature there arise in him conformity and change-of-lineage, followed by the fourth and final path, the path of arahatship (*arahattamagga*). This path eradicates the remaining five fetters – desire for existence in the fine material realm

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[1] Nyanatiloka, Comp., trans. and ed., *The Buddha's Path to Deliverance in its Threefold Division and Seven Stages of Purity Being a Systematic Exposition in the Work of the Sutta Piṭaka*, (Colombo, Ceylon: The Bauddha Sahitya Sabha, 1952; rev. 3d ed. Colombo, Ceylon: The Bauddha Sahitya Sabha, 1969), p. 189 (hereafter cited as *Path to Deliverance*). "… Bhikkhu tiṇṇaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā - rāgadosamohānaṃ tanuttā sakadāgāmi hoti sakid eva imaṃ lokaṃ āgantvā dukkhass'antaṃ karoti." AN. 2:238.

[2] *Path to Deliverance*. p. 189. "… Bhikkhu pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātiko hoti tatthaparinibbāyī anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā." AN. 2:238.

(*rūparāga*), desire for existence in the immaterial realm (*arūparāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). The fourth path is followed immediately by its fruition, the fruit of arahatship (*arahatta-phala*), after which reviewing knowledge occurs. The text reads:

> But after the vanishing of all biases [ten fetters] he reaches already in this world, the liberation of mind and the liberation through wisdom, after realizing and understanding it in his own person.[1]

At the moment of the path the yogin is reckoned as one standing on the path of arahatship, the seventh noble person; at the moment of fruition he becomes an arahat, the eighth noble person. At this point he has completed the development of the path and reached the goal of full liberation.

> He is one of the Great Ones with cankers destroyed, he bears his last body, he has laid down the burden, reached his goal and destroyed the fetter of becoming, he is rightly liberated with [final] knowledge and worthy of the highest offerings of the world with its deities.[2]

The eight individuals, from the person standing on the path of stream-entry to the arahat, make up the ariyan Sangha, the community of noble persons forming the third refuge and third jewel of Buddhist veneration. As the Buddha says:

> Bhikkhus, there are these eight persons worthy of offerings and hospitality, of gifts and homage, an incomparable field of merit to the world.
>
> The stream-enterer, he who has entered the path to the realization of the fruit of stream-entry, the once-returner, he who has entered the path to the realization of the fruit of once-returner, the non-returner, he who has entered the path to the realization of the fruit of non-returner, the arahat, and he who has entered the path to arahatship.[3] (Wr. tr.).

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[1] *Path to Deliverance*. p. 189. "… Bhikkhu āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭh'eva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati." AN. 2:238.

[2] PP., p. 792. "mahākhīṇasavo antimadehadāri ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parīkkhiṇabhavasaṃyojano sammaññāvimutto sadevakassa lokassa aggadakkhiṇeyyoti." Vism., p. 582.

[3] "Aṭṭh'ime bhikkhave puggalā āhuneyyā, pāhuneyyā, dakkhineyyā, añjalikaranīyā anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa.

Sotāpanno sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno, sakadāgāmi sakadāgāmiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno, anāgāmi anāgāmiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno, arahā arahattāya paṭipanno." AN. 4:292-93.

Chapter Eight

JHĀNA AND THE NOBLE ATTAINMENTS

In the last chapter we followed the progressive unfolding of the path of wisdom culminating in full liberation. This path took us through the supramundane attainments of the four paths and fruits by which the defilements are destroyed and deliverance from suffering is achieved. In the course of our discussion we mentioned that the path and fruits always occur as occasions of *jhāna*. In the present chapter we will explore more fully these supramundane *jhānas*, examining them in their own nature, in relation to their mundane counterparts, and in the context of the cognitive processes to which they belong. Then we will consider two special achievements in the meditative field accessible only to particular types of noble persons – the attainment of fruition (*phalasamāpatti*) and the attainment of cessation (*nirodhasamāpatti*). This will be followed by an overview of the Theravāda Buddhist typology of noble persons, presented from the standpoint of determining their relation to the mundane accomplishment of *jhāna*. This overview will enable us to assess, in the last section of this chapter, the place of *jhāna* in the life of the arahat, the spiritually perfected man in Theravāda Buddhism.

Supramundane Jhāna

The supramundane paths and fruits, as we saw, always arise as states of *jhānic* consciousness. They occur as states of *jhāna* because they contain within themselves the factors of *jhāna* (*jhānaṅga*) elevated to a level of intensity corresponding to that of the factors in the mundane *jhānas*. Since they possess the *jhāna*-factors endowed with such intensity these states are able to fix upon their object with the force of full absorption. Thence, taking the absorptive force of the *jhāna* factors as the criterion, the paths and fruits may be reckoned as belonging to either the first, second, third or fourth *jhāna* of the fourfold scheme, or to the first, second, third, fourth or fifth *jhāna* of the fivefold scheme.

Though a fully explicit recognition of the supramundane *jhānic* character of the paths and fruits first comes out in the Abhidhammapiṭaka, the basis for this recognition goes back to the suttas. In the section of the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, "the Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness" (DN. No. 22), where the Buddha defines each factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), the eighth factor, is defined by the standard formula for the four *jhānas*:

> And what, bhikkhus, is right concentration? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu, quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.

> With the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought he enters and dwells in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration.
>
> With the fading away of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and discerning; and he experiences in his own person that happiness of which the noble ones say: 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful' – thus he enters and dwells in the third *jhāna*.
>
> With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.
>
> This, bhikkhus, is right concentration.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Right concentration, however, can be either mundane or supramundane. That the right concentration here defined as the four *jhānas* is supramundane becomes clear from the Mahācattārīsaka Sutta (MN. No. 117), a discourse exploring the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. In this discourse, rather than presenting the path in its own name, the Buddha discusses it under the name of "noble right concentration with its supports and accompaniments." He begins by asking the monks: "What, monks, is noble right concentration with its supports and accompaniments?" The answer he gives himself:

> There are right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness. The one-pointedness of mind accompanied by these seven factors – this is noble right concentration with its supports and accompaniments.[2] (Wr. tr.).

Each of the path factors in turn is said to have two forms, a mundane form which is "subject to the cankers, pertaining to the side of merit, maturing in the foundations of existence,"[3] (Wr. tr.), and another form which is "noble, free from cankers, supramundane, a factor of the path."[4] (Wr. tr.). The latter is found in "the noble state of consciousness, the cankerless state of consciousness, in one equipped with the noble path, in one developing the noble path."[5] (Wr. tr.). Since these factors accompanying right concentration of the noble path are defined as supramundane, it follows that the four *jhānas* making up right concentration in the Noble Eightfold Path are also supramundane.

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[1] DN. 2:313.

[2] "Katamo ca, bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhi sa-upaniso saparikkhāro? Seyyathīdaṃ: sammādiṭṭhi sammāsaṃkappo sammāvācā sammākamanto sammā-ājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati. Yā kho, bhikkhave, imehi sattaṅgehi cittassa ekaggatā parikkhātā; ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, ariyo sammā samādhi sa-upaniso iti pi, saparikkhāro iti pi." MN. 3:71.

[3] "Sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā." MN. 3:72.

[4] "Ariyā anāsavā lokuttara maggaṅgā." *Ibid.*

[5] "Ariya cittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato." *Ibid.*

In the Abhidhamma system of explanation this connection between the *jhānas*, paths, and fruits comes to be worked out with great intricacy of detail. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi, in its section on states of consciousness, expounds each of the path and fruition states of consciousness as occasions, first, of one or another of the four *jhānas* in the tetradic scheme, and then again as occasions of one or another of the five *jhānas* in the pentadic scheme.[1] Standard Abhidhammic exposition, as formalized in the synoptical manuals of Abhidhamma, employs the fivefold scheme and brings each of the paths and fruits into connection with each of the five *jhānas*. In this way the eight types of supramundane consciousness – the path and fruition consciousness of stream-entry, the once-returner, the non-returner, and arahatship – proliferate to forty types of supramundane consciousness, since any path or fruit can occur at the level of any of the five *jhānas*. This procedure is elaborated in the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*:

> The First Jhāna Sotāpatti Path-consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, joy, happiness, and one-pointedness,
>
> The Second Jhāna Sotāpatti Path-consciousness together with sustained application, joy, happiness, and one-pointedness,
>
> The Third Jhāna Sotāpatti Path-consciousness together with joy, happiness, and one-pointedness,
>
> The Fourth Jhāna Sotāpatti Path-consciousness together with happiness and one-pointedness,
>
> The Fifth Jhāna Sotāpatti Path-consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.
>
> So are the Sakadāgāmi Path-consciousness, Anāgāmi Path-consciousness, and Arahatta Path-consciousness, making exactly twenty classes of consciousness. Similarly there are twenty classes of Fruit-consciousness. Thus there are forty types of supramundane consciousness.[2]

The medieval Ceylonese commentator Sāriputta glosses this passage thus: "Stream-entry path-consciousness accompanied by the five-factored first *jhāna* with initial thought, etc. is called 'the first *jhāna sotāpatti* path-consciousness'."[3] (Wr. tr.). And so for the rest.

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[1] Dhs., pp. 74-86.

[2] Nārada, *Manual.*, pp. 63-64. "Vitakka-vicāra-pīti-sukh'ekaggatā-sahitaṃ Paṭhamajjhāna-Sotāpattimaggacittaṃ,

Vicāra-pīti-sukh'ekaggatā-sahitaṃ Dutiyajjhāna-Sotāpattimaggacittaṃ,

Pīti-sukh'ekaggatā-sahitaṃ Tatiyajjhāna Sotāpattimaggacittaṃ,

Sukh'ekaggatā-sahitaṃ Catutthajjhāna Sotāpattimaggacittaṃ.

Upekkh'ekaggatā-sahitaṃ Pañcamajjhāna Sotāpattimaggacittaṃ c'ati.

…Tathā Sakadāgāmimagga, Anāgāmimagga, Arahattamaggacittañ c'āti, samavīsati maggacittāni. Tathā phalacittāni c'ati samacattāḷīsa lokuttaracittāni bhavantī'ti." *Ibid*, pp. 62-63.

[3] Paṭhamajjhānena vitakkādipañcaṅgikajjhānena sampayuttaṃ sotāpattimaggacittaṃ paṭhamajjhāna-sotāpattimaggacittaṃ." AS., p. 37. *Vibhāvanī Ṭīkā*, pp. 36f. Dhs.A., pp. 272-73.

It should be noted that there are no paths and fruits conjoined with the immaterial attainments (*āruppas*). The reason for this omission is that supramundane *jhāna* is presented solely from the standpoint of its factorial constitution, and the formless attainments have the same factors as the fifth *jhāna* – equanimity and one-pointedness. They differ only in regard to the object, a consideration here irrelevant since the paths and fruits all take *nibbāna* as their object.

The fullest treatment of the supramundane *jhānas* in the authoritative Pāli literature can be found in the Dhammasaṅgaṇi's exposition of the supramundane states of consciousness, read in conjunction with the commentary on these passages in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā*. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi opens its analysis of the first wholesome supramundane consciousness with the words:

> On the occasion when one develops supramundane *jhāna* which is emancipating, leading to the demolition (of existence), for the abandonment of views, for reaching the first plane, secluded from sense pleasures... one enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*.[1] (Wr. tr.).

It then goes on to enumerate the various wholesome mental phenomena present on the occasion of that consciousness, defining each of these by their standard synonyms. We will consider the most significant auxiliary constituents of the supramundane *jhānas* shortly, but first it is instructive to look at the introductory phrase itself in the light of its commentarial elucidation.

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* explains the word *lokuttara*, which we have been translating "supramundane," as meaning "it crosses over the world, it transcends the world, it stands having surmounted and overcome the world."[2] (Wr. tr.). It glosses the phrases "one develops *jhāna*" thus: "One develops, produces, cultivates absorption *jhāna* lasting for a single thought-moment."[3] (Wr. tr.). This gloss shows us two things about the consciousness of the path: first that it occurs as a *jhāna* at the level of full absorption, and second that this absorption of the path lasts for only a single thought-moment. The word "emancipating" (*niyyānika*) is explained to mean that this *jhāna* goes out (*niyyāti*) from the world, from the round of existence, the phrase "leading to demolition" (*apacayagāmi*) that it demolishes and dismantles the process of rebirth.[4]

This last phrase points to a striking difference between mundane and supramundane *jhāna*. The Dhammasaṅgaṇi's exposition of the former begins: "On the occasion when one develops the path for rebirth in the fine material sphere... one enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*."[5] (Wr. tr.). Thus, with this statement, mundane *jhāna* is shown as sustaining the round of rebirths; it is a wholesome *kamma* leading to renewed existence. But the supramundane *jhāna* of the path does not promote the accumulation of the round; to the contrary, it brings about the round's dismantling and demolition. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* underscores this difference with an illustrative simile:

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[1] "Yasmiṃ samaye lokuttaraṃ jhānaṃ bhāveti niyyānikaṃ apacayagāmiṃ diṭṭhigatānaṃ pahānāya paṭhamāya bhūmiyā pattiyā vivicceva kāmehi… paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati." Dhs., p. 72.

[2] "Lokaṃ taratīti lokuttaraṃ, lokaṃ uttaratīti lokuttaraṃ, lokaṃ samatikkamma abhibhuyya tiṭṭhatīti lokuttaraṃ." Dhs.A., p. 259.

[3] "Jhānam bhāvetīti ekacittakkhaṇikaṃ appanājhānaṃ bhāveti janeti vaḍḍheti." *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] "Yasmiṃ samaye rūpūpapattiyā maggaṃ bhāveti vivicceva kāmehi… paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati." Dhs., p. 44.

> The wholesome states of the three planes are said to lead to accumulation because they build up and increase death and rebirth in the round. But not this. Just as when one man has built up a wall eighteen feet high another might take a club and go along demolishing it, so this goes along demolishing and dismantling the deaths and rebirths built up by the wholesome *kammas* of the three planes by bringing about a deficiency in their conditions. Thus it leads to demolition.[1] (Wr. tr.).

The *jhāna* is said to be cultivated "for the abandoning of views." This phrase signifies the function of the first path, which is to eradicate the fetters. The supramundane *jhāna* of the first path cuts off the fetter of personality view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) and all speculative views derived from it. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* points out that here we should understand that it abandons not only wrong views but other unwholesome states as well, namely doubt, clinging to rites and rituals, and greed, hatred, and delusion strong enough to lead to the plane of misery. The phrase "for reaching the first plane" the commentary explicates as meaning for attaining the fruit of stream entry.[2]

Immediately after this passage the Dhammasaṅgaṇi lists the constituting phenomena comprised in the supramundane *jhāna*, followed by their definitions. The elaborate and complex expository method of the canonical Abhidhamma word has been streamlined in the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*. By avoiding repetitions of the same factor under different headings the manual assigns thirty-eight mental factors (*cetasikas*) to the first *jhāna* state of consciousness, whether of any of the four paths and fruits. These are the seven factors common to all states of consciousness, the six general variables, the nineteen universal beautiful factors, wisdom, and three abstinences – right speech, right action, and right livelihood. Two immeasurables – compassion and sympathetic joy – are always excluded from the paths and fruits.[3]

We saw earlier that the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* attributes thirty-five possible mental factors to the first mundane *jhāna*.[4] This invites a comparison between the composition of the two states. Firstly it will be noticed that compassion and sympathetic joy can be present in mundane *jhāna* but not in the supramundane. The reason is that those mental factors have sentient beings for object, while the paths and fruits objectify *nibbāna*.[1] Secondly we should note that the three abstinences are present in the supramundane *jhānas* but not in the mundane. This is because in mundane consciousness an abstinence (*virati*) is only present on an occasion when one is deliberately exercising restraint of speech, body, or livelihood. In mundane *jhāna* no such restraint is being applied; it is only applied in wholesome sense sphere consciousness when one is resisting the impulse towards moral transgression. Even then only one abstinence can occur at a time, and only with respect to one violation covered by the abstinence – for right speech abstaining from lying, slander, harsh speech, *or* idle chatter; for right action abstaining from killing, stealing, *or* sexual misconduct; for right livelihood abstaining from one *or* another form of wrong livelihood. But in the supramundane states the three abstinences occur simultaneously, and they occur with respect to all the violations covered by the abstinence. In the supramundane *jhānas* of the path they have the function not merely of inhibiting immoral actions, but of destroying the tendencies for these transgressions to occur. For this reason the Dhammasaṅgaṇi describes each abstinence as *setughāta*, "breaking the bridge," which the commentary explains as meaning that the abstinence uproots the condition for misconduct of speech, action or livelihood.[2]

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[1] "Yathā ca pana tebhūmakakusalaṃ vattasmiṃ cutipaṭisandhiyo ācināti vaḍḍhetīti ācayagāmi nāma hoti. Na tathā idaṃ. Idaṃ pana yathā ekasmiṃ purise aṭṭhārasahatthā pākārā cinante aparo mahamuggaraṃ gahetvā tena citacitaṭṭhānaṃ apacinanto vidhaṃsento eva gaccheyya. Evameva tebhūmakakusalena cita cutipaṭisandhiyo paccayavekallākārena apacinantaṃ vidhaṃsentaṃ gacchatīti apacayagāmi." Dhs.A., p. 259.

[2] Dhs.A., pp. 259-60.

[3] Nārada, *Manual.*, pp. 127-29. NB: The higher *jhānas* have respectively thirty-seven, thirty-six, and thirty-five components as applied thought, sustained thought, and rapture are abandoned at these levels.

[4] See above, Chapter IV, pp. 149-50.

In the Dhammasaṅgaṇi's enumeration of states, the factor of wisdom enters into the supramundane *jhānas* as three new faculties spread out over the four paths and fruits. These three are the faculty of "I shall know the unknown" (*anaññātaññassāmitindriya*), the faculty of final knowledge (*aññindriya*), and the faculty of the completion of final knowledge (*aññātavindriya*).[3] The first is present in the first path, the second in the six intermediate states from the first fruition through the fourth path, and the third in the fourth fruition, the fruit of arahatship. The faculty of "I shall know the unknown" is the wisdom-faculty of one standing on the path of stream-entry, the "unknown" being, according to the commentary, the deathless state of *nibbāna* or the Four Noble Truths, neither of which has been known before in beginningless *saṃsāra*.[4] The faculty of final knowledge is the same faculty of wisdom in those at the intermediate stages of progress, while the faculty of the completion of final knowledge is the fully matured wisdom of the arahat. None of these faculties is present in mundane *jhāna*.

A good number of constituent factors present in mundane *jhāna* are repeated again in the analysis of supramundane *jhāna*, but to these the Dhammasaṅgaṇi adds two qualifying phrases not given in the definitions of their mundane counterparts. These are the phrases "path factor" (*maggaṅga*) and "enlightenment factor" (*bojjhaṅga*). The former attaches to all those states which, under one or another of their different names, enter into the Noble Eightfold Path as right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.[1] Though five of these states – right view, right intention, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration – are present in mundane *jhāna*, they are not present as path factors (*maggaṅga*) for on those occasions they do not pertain to the noble path leading directly to the cessation of suffering.

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[1] The other two immeasurables – loving kindness and equanimity – are particular modes of the mental factors "non-hatred" and "specific neutrality." Since their parent factors do not necessarily have sentient beings for object they can be present even with other objects and are, in fact, universal concomitants of wholesome states of consciousness.

[2] Dhs.A., p. 264.

[3] Dhs., pp. 77, 91, 138.

[4] Dhs.A., p. 261.

The phrase "enlightenment factor" attaches to the states belonging to the seven factors of enlightenment: mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. This collection of states is called "enlightenment" or "awakening" (*bodhi*) because, when it arises at the moment of the supramundane paths, it enables the noble disciple to awaken from the sleep of the defilements.[2] Its components can be present in the mundane *jhānas* but they are not present there as enlightenment factors. They function as enlightenment factors only in the supramundane *jhānas* of the noble paths and fruits, for only then do they contribute immediately to the attainment of enlightenment.

Besides these several other differences between mundane and supramundane *jhāna* may be briefly noted. Firstly, with regard to their objects, the mundane *jhānas* have a conceptual entity (*paññatti*) as object; for the *kasiṇas*, impurities, mindfulness of breathing, etc. the object is the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāganimitta*), for the divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*) it is sentient beings. In contrast, for the supramundane *jhāna* of the paths and fruits the object is exclusively *nibbāna*, a truly existent state (*sabhāva-dhamma*).

With regard to their predominant tone, in mundane *jhāna* the element of serenity (*samatha*) prevails. Though the factor of wisdom enters into the mundane *jhānas* it does not do so with any special prominence. In contrast, the supramundane *jhāna* of the paths and fruits brings serenity and insight into balance. Wisdom is present as right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and serenity as right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). Both function together in perfect harmony. As the *Visuddhimagga* explains, paraphrasing a passage from the Paṭisambhidāmagga:

> At the time of developing the eight mundane attainments the serenity power is in excess, while at the time of developing the contemplations of impermanence, etc., the insight power is in excess. But at the noble path moment they occur coupled together in the sense that neither one exceeds the other.[3]

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[1] It should be noted that in the paths and fruits occurring at the level of the second through fifth *jhānas*, only seven path factors are present. This is because right intention (*sammāsaṃkappa*) is a form of *vitakka*, which is made to subside with the attainment of the second *jhāna*. Similarly, in the paths and fruits of the fourth and fifth *jhānic* levels only six enlightenment factors are present, rapture having been abandoned with the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* of the fivefold system.

[2] See Dhs.A., p. 262.

[3] PP., p. 798. "Lokiyānañ ca aṭṭhannaṃ samāpattīnaṃ bhāvanākāle samathabalaṃ adhikaṃ hoti; aniccānupassanādīnaṃ bhāvanākāle vipassanābalaṃ. Ariyamaggakhaṇe pana yuganaddhā te dhammā pavattanti aññamaññaṃ anativattanaṭṭhena." Vism., p. 586.

This difference in prevailing tone leads into a difference in function or activity between the two kinds of *jhāna*. Both the mundane and supramundane are *jhānas* in the sense of closely attending (*upanijjhāna*) but in the case of mundane *jhāna* this close attention issues merely in an absorption into the object, an absorption that can only suppress the defilements temporarily. In the supramundane *jhāna*, particularly of the four paths, the coupling of close attention with wisdom brings the exercise of four functions at a single moment. These four functions each apply to one of the Four Noble Truths, representing the particular way that noble truth is penetrated at the time the paths arise comprehending the truths. The four functions are full understanding (*pariññā*), abandonment (*pahāna*), realization (*sacchikiriya*), and development (*bhāvanā*). The path penetrates the first noble truth by fully understanding suffering; it penetrates the second noble truth by abandoning craving, the origin of suffering; it penetrates the third noble truth by realizing *nibbāna*, the cessation of suffering; and it penetrates the fourth noble truth by developing the Noble Eightfold Path, the way to the end of suffering. The *Visuddhimagga* quotes a passage from the ancients to clear away doubts that one experience can perform four functions simultaneously:

> For this is said by the Ancients 'just as a lamp performs four functions simultaneously in a single moment – it burns the wick, dispels darkness, makes light appear, and uses up the oil – so too, path knowledge penetrates to the four truths simultaneously in a single moment – it penetrates to suffering by penetrating to it with full-understanding, penetrates to origination by penetrating to it with abandoning, penetrates to the path by penetrating to it with developing and penetrates to cessation by penetrating to it with realizing. What is meant? By making cessation its object it reaches, sees and pierces the four truths.[1]

Filling in the simile, Buddhaghosa explains that as the lamp burns the wick the path knowledge understands suffering; as the lamp dispels darkness the path abandons craving; as the lamp makes light appear the path develops the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path; and as the lamp consumes the oil, the path realizes *nibbāna*, which destroys the defilements.[2] Though this fourfold function is peculiar to the path-consciousness and is not fully shared by fruition, the latter still exercises a decisively cognitive function in that it is said to "closely attend to the real characteristic, the truth of cessation."[3] (Wr. tr.).

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1. PP., p. 808. "Vuttaṃ h'etaṃ porāṇehi: 'Yathā padīpo apubbaṃ acarimaṃ ekakkhaṇena cattāri kiccāni karoti, vaṭṭiṃ jhāpeti, andhakāraṃ vidhamati, ālokaṃ pavidaṃseti, sinehaṃ pariyādiyati, evaṃ eva maggañāṇaṃ apubbaṃ acarimaṃ ekakkhaṇena cattāri saccāni abhisameti, dukkhaṃ pariññābhisamayena abhisameti, samudayaṃ pahānābhisamayena abhisameti, maggaṃ bhāvanābhisamayena abhisameti, nirodhaṃ sacchikiriyābhisamayena abhisameti. Kiṃ vuttaṃ hoti? Nirodhaṃ ārammaṇaṃ karitvā cattāri pi saccāni pāpuṇāti passati paṭivijjhatī ti.'" Vism., p. 593.

2. PP., p. 809. Vism., p. 593.

3. "Phalaṃ pana nirodhasaccaṃ tathalakkhaṇaṃ upanijjhāyati." Dhs.A., p. 211.

The Jhānic Level of the Path and Fruit

When the paths and fruits are assigned to the level of the four or five *jhānas*, the question arises as to what factor determines their particular level of *jhānic* intensity. In other words, why do the path and fruit arise for one yogin at the level of the first *jhāna*, for another at the level of the second *jhāna* and so forth? The *Visuddhimagga* and the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* deal with this issue in almost identical ways, discussing it in terms of the question as to what governs the difference in the number of the noble path's enlightenment factors (*bojjhaṅga*), path factors, (*maggaṅga*) and *jhāna* factors (*jhānaṅga*).[1]

Both texts present three theories concerning the determinant of the *jhānic* level of the path. These theories were apparently formulated by ancient commentators and handed down in succession through their lineages of pupils. The first, ascribed to the Elder Tipiṭaka Cūla Nāga, holds that it is the basic *jhāna* (*pādakajjhāna*), i.e. the *jhāna* used as a basis for the insight leading to emergence in immediate proximity to the path, that governs the difference in the *jhānic* level of the path. A second theory, ascribed to the Elder Mahā Datta of Moravāpi, says that the difference is governed by the aggregates made the objects of insight (*vipassanāya ārammaṇabhūtā khandhā*) on the occasion of insight leading to emergence. A third theory, ascribed to the Elder Tipiṭaka Cūla Abhaya, holds that it is the personal inclination (*puggalajjhāsaya*) of the meditator that governs the difference.

According to the first theory, the path arisen in a dry insight meditator (*sukkhavipassaka*) who lacks *jhāna*, and the path arisen in one who possesses a *jhāna* attainment but does not use it as a basis for insight, and the path arisen by comprehending formations after emerging from the first *jhāna*, are all paths of the first *jhāna* only. They all have eight path factors, seven enlightenment factors, and five *jhāna* factors. When the path is produced after emerging from the second, third, fourth, and fifth *jhānas*, and using these as the basis for insight, then the path pertains to the level of the *jhāna* used as a basis – the second, third, fourth or fifth. The path will have respectively, four, three, two, and again two *jhāna* factors. However, these paths will possess only seven path factors, since "right intention" (*sammāsaṃkappa*), as a mode of applied thought (*vitakka*), has been eliminated in the second and higher *jhānas*. Those paths associated with the fourth and fifth *jhāna* will also lack the enlightenment factor of rapture (*pītisambojjhanga*), and thus have only six enlightenment factors. For a meditator using an immaterial *jhāna* as basis the path will be a fifth *jhāna* path.

Thus in this first theory, when formations are comprehended by insight after emerging from a basic *jhāna*, then it is the *jhāna* attainment emerged from at the point nearest to the path, i.e. just before insight leading to emergence is reached, that makes the path similar in nature to itself.[2]

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[1] PP., pp. 778-80. Vism., pp. 572-73. Dhs.A., pp. 271-74. *Expositor*, 2:307-308.

[2] PP., p. 779. Vism., p. 573. Dhs.A., p. 272. *Expositor*, 2:307-308.

According to the second theory the path that arises is similar in nature to the states which are being comprehended with insight at the time insight leading to emergence occurs. Thus if the meditator, after emerging from a meditative attainment, is comprehending with insight sense sphere phenomena or the constituents of the first *jhāna*, then the path produced will occur at the level of that *jhāna*.[1] On this theory, then, it is the comprehended *jhāna* (*sammasitajjhāna*) that determines the *jhānic* quality of the path. The one qualification that must be added is that a yogin cannot contemplate with insight a *jhāna* higher than he is capable of attaining.

According to the third theory, the path occurs at the level of whichever *jhāna* the meditator wishes – either at the level of the *jhāna* he has used as the basis for insight or at the level of that *jhāna* he has made the object of insight-comprehension. In other words, the *jhānic* quality of the path accords with his personal inclination. However, mere wish alone is not sufficient. For the path to occur at the *jhānic* level wished for, the mundane *jhāna* must have been either made the basis for insight or used as the object of insight-comprehension.[2]

The difference between the three theories can be understood through a simple example.[3] If a meditator reaches the supramundane path by contemplating with insight the first *jhāna* after emerging from the fifth *jhāna*, then according to the first theory his path will belong to the fifth *jhāna*, while according to the second theory it will belong to the first *jhāna*. Thus these two theories are incompatible when a difference obtains between basic *jhāna* and comprehended *jhāna*. But according to the third theory, the path becomes of whichever *jhāna* the meditator wishes, either the first or the fifth. Thus this doctrine does not necessarily clash with the other two.

Buddhaghosa himself does not make a decision among these three theories. He only points out that in all three doctrines, beneath their disagreements, there is the recognition that the insight leading to emergence determines the *jhānic* character of the path. For this insight is the proximate and principal cause for the arising of the path, so whether it be the insight leading to emergence near the basic *jhāna* or that occurring through the contemplated *jhāna* or that fixed by the meditator's wish, it is in all cases this final phase of insight that gives definition to the supramundane path, fixing its path factors and *jhāna* factors.[4] Since fruition that occurs immediately after the path has an identical constitution to the path, its own supramundane *jhāna* is determined by the path. Thus a first *jhāna* path produces a first *jhāna* fruit, and so on for the remaining *jhānas*.

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[1] PP., p. 779. Vism., p. 573. Dhs.A., pp. 272-73. *Expositor*, 2:308.

[2] PP., p. 780. Vism., p. 574. Dhs.A., p. 273.

[3] Dhs.A., p. 274. *Expositor*, 2:310.

[4] PP., pp. 778-79. Vism. p. 573.

Two Attainments of the Noble Ones

The Theravāda tradition recognizes two special meditative attainments which are open only to particular types of noble persons (*ariyapuggala*). These two are the attainment of fruition (*phalasamāpatti*) and the attainment of cessation (*nirodhasamāpatti*). The former is a *jhāna* proper of the supramundane class; the latter, though not a *jhāna*, still demands complete mastery over the mundane *jhānas* as a prerequisite for its achievement. We will now consider each of these attainments in turn.

The Attainment of Fruition

The fruition consciousness (*phalacitta*) is a supramundane state of consciousness classed as a resultant (*vipāka*) because it is produced by the corresponding path consciousness. Like the path consciousness, which it resembles almost exactly in content, fruition is a *jhāna* operating at the *jhānic* level of the path. Fruition consciousness occurs in two ways. Its initial occurrence, which we have already discussed, takes place in the cognitive series of the path, when it arises in immediate succession to the path consciousness. On that occasion it persists for two or three thought-moments experiencing the bliss of liberation, and then subsides, followed by the life-continuum. But fruition consciousness can occur in another way too. This second mode of occurrence takes the form of a special meditative attainment accessible to the noble persons of the four stages of deliverance. This meditative attainment is called the attainment of fruition (*phalasamāpatti*), and comes in four grades corresponding to the four stages of holiness: the fruition attainment of stream-entry, the fruition attainment of the once-returner, the fruition attainment of the non-returner, and the fruition attainment of arahatship.

Like the fruition consciousness occurring in immediate succession to the path, the attainment of fruition is a supramundane *jhāna* having *nibbāna* for its object. But whereas fruition in the cognitive series of the path lasts only for two or three thought-moments, the fruition attainment entered subsequently by a noble person can last for as long as the meditator determines; it can continue as a series of fruition consciousnesses following one another in uninterrupted succession for hours or even days on end. Thus fruition attainment provides the ariyans with a special resort to which they can turn in order to experience for themselves the bliss of *nibbāna* here and now.

The *Visuddhimagga* discusses fruition attainment under a number of headings. It first defines the attainment of fruition as consisting in the "absorption of the noble fruition in cessation."[1] The *Mahā Ṭīkā* glosses this as meaning that fruition attainment is "the occurrence of the noble fruition-*jhāna* in the mode of absorption with *nibbāna* as its object."[2] (Wr. tr.). Thus this definition discloses two important facts about the attainment of fruition: that it is a *jhāna*, and that this *jhāna* has *nibbāna* as its object. Though fruition consciousness, on occasions of fruition attainment, is not preceded by a path – each path being unique and unrepeatable – its *jhānic* level always continues to correspond to that of the path from which it originally issued. A yogin who attained a first *jhāna* path will subsequently enter only a first *jhāna* fruition attainment, one who had a second *jhāna* path will always attain a second *jhāna* fruition, etc.[1]

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[1] PP., p. 820. "Yā ariyaphalassa nirodhe appanā." Vism., p. 602.

[2] "Ariyassa phalajhānassa nibbāne ārammaṇabhūte appanākārena pavatti." Vism.T. 2:515.

Fruition attainment, the *Visuddhimagga* explains, is beyond the range of worldlings (*puthujjana*), but is available to all noble ones. Each noble person attains that fruition corresponding to his own level of liberation: the stream-enterer attains the fruition of stream-entry, the once-returner the fruition of a once-returner, and so forth. Those who have reached a higher path do not attain a lower fruition while those on a lower level do not attain a higher fruition.[2] The ariyans resort to this attainment for the purpose of experiencing *nibbānic* bliss here and now:

> For just as a king experiences royal bliss and a deity experiences divine bliss, so too the noble ones think 'We shall experience the noble supramundane bliss', and after deciding on the duration, they attain the attainment of fruition whenever they choose.[3]

Fruition attainment comes about by turning the mind away from all objects other than *nibbāna* and focussing it exclusively upon *nibbāna*. To attain fruition the noble disciple should go into solitary retreat, make a prior determination to enter fruition, and then develop insight on formations, going through the series of insights beginning with knowledge of rise and fall. Insight progresses as far as conformity, followed by change-of-lineage knowledge with formations as its object, then "immediately next to it consciousness becomes absorbed in cessation with the attainment of fruition."[4] Since the prior determination was made for fruition, not for a higher path, insight only issues in fruition attainment and not in a higher path. The attainment of the latter requires a separate and different guiding aspiration before developing insight.

Fruition attainment is made to last by a prior volition determining the time of the attainment: for it is by determining it thus 'I shall emerge at such a time' that it lasts until that time comes. Emergence comes when the mind turns away from *nibbāna* and takes as its object some sign of formations. Immediately after fruition attainment is emerged from the mind lapses into the life continuum (*bhavaṅga*). Fruition attainment also occurs momentarily in the process of emerging from the attainment of cessation.[5]

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[1] PP., p. 822. Vism., p. 603.

[2] PP., p. 820. Vism., p. 602.

[3] PP., p. 821. "Yathā hi rājā rajjasukhaṃ devatā dibbasukhaṃ anubhavanti, evaṃ ariyā, ariyaṃ lokuttarasukhaṃ anubhavissāmā ti addhānaparicchedaṃ katvā icchiticehitakkhaṇe phalasamāpattiṃ samāpajjanti." Vism., p. 602.

[4] PP., p. 822. Vism., p. 603. N.B.: Whereas change-of-lineage preceding the path has *nibbāna* for its object, change-of-lineage preceding fruition attainment objectifies formations. The reason is given in the *Visuddimagga Mahā Ṭīkā*: "Why does change-of-lineage not have nibbana as its object here as it does when it precedes the path? Because states belonging to fruition are not associated with an outlet [as in the case of the path]. For this is said 'What states are an outlet? The four unincluded paths'." Vism.T. 2:518.

[5] PP., pp. 822-23. Vism., p. 603.

Fruition attainment acquires three names according to the dominant mode of insight in the course of insight-contemplation immediately preceding absorption. If the dominant insight is the contemplation of impermanence, the fruition reached is called the signless liberation (*animittavimokkha*); if the contemplation of suffering dominates fruition is called the desireless liberation (*appaṇihitavimokkha*); and if the contemplation of selflessness dominates fruition is called the void liberation (*suññatavimokkha*). But in a looser sense all three names can be applied to any fruition. For any fruition has as object *nibbāna* – the signless, desireless, and void element; and again any fruition has a nature which is void of lust, hatred, and delusion, lacking the signs of lust, hatred, and delusion, and without desires rooted in lust, hatred, and delusion.[1]

The Attainment of Cessation

A second attainment in the meditative field restricted to yogins of ariyan stature is the attainment of cessation, *nirodhasamāpatti*, also called the cessation of perception and feeling (*sannāvedayitanirodha*).[2] In this attainment it is not perception and feeling alone that cease, but all mental activity in its entirety. Thus the *Visuddhimagga* defines the attainment of cessation as "the non-occurrence of consciousness and its concomitants owing to their progressive cessation."[3]

This attainment has an even more restricted scope than fruition attainment. It can be obtained only by non-returners (*anāgāmis*) and arahats who possess the eight attainments, i.e. the four *jhānas* and the four *āruppas*. Worldlings, stream-enterers, and once-returners – even those possessing the eight attainments – cannot attain it, nor can it be attained by non-returners and arahats who lack mastery over all eight mundane *jhānas*. The reason stream-enterers and once-returners cannot attain it is that they lack the necessary qualifications. To attain cessation requires full possession of the two powers of serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Because those below the level of a non-returner have not fully abandoned sensual desire, their power of serenity is not perfected, and without the perfecting of the power of serenity there is no attainment of cessation.[4] Cessation can also only be reached in "five constituent becoming," i.e. in realms where all five aggregates are found. It cannot be reached in the immaterial realms since it must be preceded by the four fine material *jhānas*, which are lacking in those realms.[5]

Non-returners and arahats with the required qualifications attain to cessation because, being wearied by the occurrence and dissolution of formations, they think: "Let us dwell in bliss by being without consciousness here and now and reaching the cessation that is nibbāna."[6] The *Visuddhimagga Mahā Ṭīkā* points out that the phrase "cessation that is

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[1] Nārada, *Manual.*, pp. 422-23. MN. 1:298.

[2] MN. 1:175, 296, 301-302.

[3] PP., p. 824. "Yā anupubbanirodhavasena cittacetasikānaṃ dhammānaṃ appavatti." Vism., p. 604.

[4] PP., p. 827. Vism., p. 607.

[5] PP., p. 828. Vism., p. 607.

[6] PP., p. 828. Vism., p. 607.

nibbāna" means that cessation is similar to the *nibbāna* element without residue (*anupādisesanibbānadhātu*).[1] It should not be taken literally as establishing identity between the two.

To enter cessation the qualified meditator must strive to bring about the cessation of consciousness belonging to the base of neither perception nor non-perception. This demands the balanced coupling of serenity and insight. One who utilizes serenity alone can reach the base of neither perception nor non-perception but cannot reach cessation. One who utilizes insight alone can enter fruition attainment but not cessation. The attainment of cessation requires the alternative application of both serenity and insight.[2]

A meditator wishing to attain cessation enters the first *jhāna*, emerges from it, and contemplates its formations with insight as impermanent, suffering, and selfless. He repeats the same procedure with each meditative attainment up to the base of nothingness, the next to last immaterial *jhāna*. After emerging from the base of nothingness he then must perform four preparatory tasks. First he resolves that any requisites he has with him that belong to others will not be damaged by fire, water, wind, thieves, rats, etc. while he is in cessation. This resolution gives effective protection during the duration of his attainment; his own belongings are protected from damage by the power of the attainment itself. Secondly he resolves that if he is needed by the community of bhikkhus he will emerge from his attainment before a bhikkhu comes to call him. Thirdly he resolves that if the Buddha needs to summon him he should emerge before a bhikkhu is sent to call him. And fourthly he determines that his life span will last at least seven days from the moment he attains cessation.

Having performed these four preparatory tasks, the meditator attains the base of neither perception nor non-perception. Then after one or two turns of consciousness have passed the process of consciousness ceases; he becomes without consciousness, attaining to cessation. The stopping of consciousness takes place automatically, as a result of the meditator's determination to reach cessation. As the nun Dhammadinnā explains:

> Friend Visākha, it does not occur to a monk who is attaining the stopping of perception and feeling: 'I will attain the stopping of perception and feeling,' or 'I am attaining the stopping of perception and feeling,' or 'I have attained the stopping of perception and feeling.' For his mind has been previously so developed in that way that it leads him on to the state of being such.[3]

The meditator will then remain in cessation for as long as he has predetermined. But if he has not done the four preliminary tasks, after reaching the base of neither perception nor-non-perception he will return to the base of nothingness without attaining cessation.[1]

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[1] Vism.T. 2:902.

[2] PP., p. 828. Vism., p. 607.

[3] MLS. 1:364. "Na kho āvuso Visākha saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjantassa bhikkhuno evaṃ hoti: ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjissaṃ ti vā, ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjāmīti vā, ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpanno ti vā, atha khvāssa pubbe va tathā cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ hoti yaṃ taṃ tathattāya upanetīti." MN. 1:302.

Like the attaining of cessation, emergence from cessation comes about automatically, through the exhaustion of the pre-determined time, unless interrupted earlier by the waiting of the bhikkhus, the summons of the Buddha, or the end of the life-span. No verbalization takes place in the course of emergence. As Dhammadinnā says:

> Friend Visākha, it does not occur to a monk who is emerging from the attainment of perception and feeling: 'I will emerge from the attainment of the stopping of perception and feeling,' or 'I am emerging...' or 'I have emerged from the attainment of the stopping of perception and feeling.' For his mind has been previously so developed in that way that it leads him on to the state of being such.[2]

Emergence from the attainment of cessation comes about by means of the fruition of non-returning in the case of a non-returner and the fruition of arahatship in the case of an arahat. As soon as the yogin emerges from cessation, there takes place a series of fruition consciousnesses appropriate to his spiritual level. But for all yogins who emerge from cessation the mind inclines to *nibbāna*: "When a bhikkhu has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, friend Visākha, his consciousness inclines to seclusion, leans to seclusion, tends to seclusion."[3] Since the mind of one emerging from cessation tends to *nibbāna*, a non-returner who has come out from cessation can use his attainment as a basis for achieving arahatship. As the Buddha says: "A bhikkhu, completely passing beyond the base of neither perception nor non-perception, enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling. Having seen with wisdom his cankers are destroyed." [4] (Wr. tr.).

The attainment of cessation represents the acme of a graduated process of bringing to a stop the formations of body and mind. The bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā explains that there are three types of formations – the bodily formation (*kāyasaṅkhāra*), the verbal formation (*vacīsaṅkhāra*), and the mental formation (*cittasaṅkhāra*). The bodily formation is in-and-out breathing, which is a bodily process connected with the body; the verbal formation is applied and sustained thought (*vitakkavicāra*), the mental factors directing verbalization; the mental formation is perception and feeling (*saññā ca vedanā ca*), which are mental processes connected with the mind. For one who is entering the attainment of cessation, Dhammadinnā states, the verbal formation ceases first [in the second *jhāna*], the bodily formation ceases next [in the fourth *jhāna*], and the mental formation ceases last [with the entrance into cessation].[1] The Buddha confirms this in a discourse explaining "the gradual cessation of formations" (*anupubbasaṅkhāra-nirodha*).[2]

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[1] PP., pp. 831-32. Vism., p. 610.

[2] MLS. 1:364. "Na kho, āvuso Visākha, saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhahantassa bhikkhuno evaṃ hoti: ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhahissanti vā, ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhahāmīti vā, ahaṃ saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhito ti vā, atha khvāssapubbe va tathā cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ hoti yaṃ taṃ tathattāya upanetīti." MN. 1:302.

[3] PP., p. 832. "Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa kho āvuso Visākha bhikkhuno vivekaninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti vivekapoṇaṃ vivekapabbhāranti." MN. 1:302.

[4] "Sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamma saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti." MN. 1:175.

The question might arise as to the difference between a corpse and a meditator in the attainment of cessation. The Venerable Sāriputta explains:

> When a bhikkhu is dead, friend, has completed his term, his bodily formations have ceased and are quite still, his verbal formations have ceased and are quite still, his mental formations have ceased and are quite still, his life is exhausted, his heat has subsided, and his faculties are broken up. When a bhikkhu has entered upon the cessation of perception and feeling, his bodily formations have ceased and are quite still, his verbal formations have ceased and are quite still, his mental formations have ceased and are quite still, his life is unexhausted, his heat has not subsided, his faculties are quite whole.[3]

Another question which might arise concerns the differences between the base of neither perception nor non-perception, the attainment of fruition, and the attainment of cessation. The attainment of cessation differs from the first two in that these two are states of consciousness made up of mind and mental factors (*citta-cetasika*) while cessation is not a state of consciousness but the stopping of the mental continuum together with its factors. The fourth *aruppa* is a purely mundane attainment in the sphere of serenity (*samatha*) accessible to all meditators with the necessary strength of concentration. Its object is purely mundane – the four aggregates of the third *aruppa*. It does not presuppose any achievements in insight or any attainment of ariyan stature; it is thus held in common by both Buddhist and non-Buddhist meditators. The attainment of fruition, in contrast, is a supramundane state bringing into balance both serenity and insight. Its object is supramundane, *nibbāna*. Each fruition is open only to those ariyans who have reached the corresponding level of deliverance and it is entered by a preliminary course of practice in insight contemplation on the three characteristics. The attainment of cessation, as distinct from both, is neither mundane nor supramundane, neither conditioned nor unconditioned. As the cessation of consciousness it takes no object. It is open solely to non-returners and arahats having the eight attainments and is reached through an alternating course of serenity and insight. Moreover, to enter the attainment of cessation requires the fulfilment of the four preliminary tasks, while such preparations are not needed for the base of neither perception nor non-perception or for the attainment of fruition.

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1. MN. 1:302.

2. SN. 4:217.

3. PP., pp. 832-33. "Yvāyaṃ, āvuso, mato, kālakato, tassa kāyasaṇkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, vacī saṅkhārā… cittasaṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, āyu parikkhiṇo, usmā vūpasantā, indriyāni paribhinnāni. Yvāyaṃ bhikkhu saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpanno, tassapi kāyasaṅkhārā niruddhā, paṭippassaddhā, vacīsaṅkhārā… citta saṅkhārā niruddhā, paṭippassaddhā, āyu aparikkhīṇo, usmā avupasantā, indriyāni aparibhinnāni ti." MN. 1:296.

The Seven Types of Noble Persons

All noble persons, as we saw, acquire supramundane *jhāna* along with their attainment of the noble paths and fruits. The noble disciples at each of the four stages of deliverance, moreover, have access to the supramundane *jhāna* of their respective fruition attainments to which they can resort to experience the peace of *nibbāna*. However, it remains problematic to what extent they share in the possession of mundane *jhāna*. To determine an answer to this question it is helpful to consult an early typology of noble disciples described most fully in the Kīṭāgiri Sutta (MN. No. 70), reformulated in the Puggalapaññatti of the Abhidhammapiṭaka, and clarified further in the commentaries. This typology classifies the eight noble persons of the four paths and fruits into seven types: [1] the faith-devotee, [2] the one liberated by faith, [3] the body-witness, [4] the one liberated in both ways, [5] the truth-devotee, [6] the one attained to understanding, and [7] the one liberated by wisdom.[1] A look at the explanation of these seven types will enable us to see the range of *jhānic* attainment reached by the noble disciples, and from there to assess the place of mundane *jhāna* in the early Buddhist picture of the perfected individual.

The seven types divide into three general classes, each class being defined by the predominance of a particular spiritual faculty. The first two types are governed roughly by predominance of faith, the middle two by predominance of concentration, and the last three by predominance of wisdom. To this division, however, certain qualifications will have to be made as we go along.

[l] The faith devotee (*saddhānusāri*) is explained in the suttas thus:

> Here someone has not yet, in his own person, reached those peaceful uncorporeal deliverances transcending all corporeality; nor have, after wisely understanding all things, the biases [*āsava*] reached extinction. But he has a certain degree of faith in the Perfect One, a certain degree of devotion to him, and he possesses such faculties as faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Such a one, O monks, is called a Faith-Devotee.[2]

The Puggalapaññatti definition reads:

> What person is a faith-devotee? In a person practising for the realization of the fruit of stream-entry the faculty of faith is predominant; he develops the noble path led by faith, with faith as the forerunner. This person is called a faith-devotee. A person practising for the realization of the fruit of stream-entry is a

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[1] In Pāli: [1] *saddhānusāri*, [2] *saddhāvimutta*, [3] *kāyasakkhi*, [4] *ubhatobhāgavimutta*, [5] *dhammānusāri*, [6] *diṭṭhippatta*, and [7] *paññāvimutta*.

[2] *Path to Deliverance*, pp. 183-84. "Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīṇā honti, Tathāgate c'assa saddhāmattaṃ hoti pemamattaṃ, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathīdaṃ saddhindriyaṃ viriyindriyaṃ satindriyaṃ samādhindriyaṃ paññindriyaṃ. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo saddhānusāri." MN. 1:479.

> faith-devotee. When established in the fruit he is one liberated by faith.[1] (Wr. tr.).

Whereas the sutta explanation explicitly mentions the lack of the "incorporeal deliverances" (*āruppā vimokkhā*), i.e. the four immaterial *jhānas*, the Puggalapaññatti omits this, but states more openly his status as a person on the path of stream-entry. Both concur in recognizing the faith-devotee as a disciple with predominance of faith. When the immaterial *jhānas* are excluded from the faith devotee's spiritual equipment, this implies nothing with regard to his achievement of the four lower mundane *jhānas*. It would seem that the faith-devotee can have previously attained any of the four fine material *jhānas* before reaching the path, and can also be a dry-insight worker bereft of mundane *jhāna*. The commentaries add a new element – a connection between the disciple's subject of insight contemplation and his dominant faculty. Thus for the faith-devotee the subject of insight is impermanence. The *Visuddhimagga* says:

> When a man brings [formations] to mind as impermanent and, having great resolution, acquires the faith faculty, he becomes a faith devotee at the moment of the stream-entry path.[2]

[2] The one liberated by faith (*saddhāvimutta*) is strictly and literally defined as a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of stream-entry through to the path of arahatship, who lacks the immaterial *jhānas* and has a predominance of the faith faculty. The Buddha explains the one liberated by faith as follows:

> But who, O monks, is the one 'Liberated by Faith'? Here someone has not yet, in his own person, reached those peaceful uncorporeal deliverances transcending all corporeality; and, after wisely understanding all things, have only some biases reached extinction; but his faith in the Perfect One is firmly established, deeply rooted and steadfast. Such a one, O monks, is called Liberated by Faith.[3]

As in the case of the faith-devotee, the one liberated by faith, while lacking the immaterial *jhānas*, may still be an obtainer of the four mundane *jhānas* as well as a dry insight worker.

The Puggalapaññatti states that the person liberated by faith is one who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified by means of wisdom the dhammas proclaimed by the Tathāgata, and having seen with wisdom has eliminated some of his cankers.

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[1] "Katamo ca puggalo saddhānusāri? Yassa puggalassa sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipannassa saddhindriyaṃ adhimattaṃ hoti. Saddhāvāhi saddhāpubbaṅgamaṃ ariyamaggaṃ bhāveti. Ayaṃ vuccati puggalo saddhānusāri. Sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno puggalo saddhānusāri. Phale ṭhito saddhāvimuttoti." *Dhātukathā Puggalapaññattipāḷi*, [Pāli Text in Burmese script]. (Rangoon. Burma: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1961), p. 182 (hereafter cited as Pug.P.).

[2] PP., p. 770. Vism., p. 566.

[3] *Path to Deliverance*, p. 183. "Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo saddhāvimutto? Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā ekacce āsavā parikkhīṇā honti, Tathāgate c'assa saddhā niviṭṭhā hoti mūlajātā patiṭṭhitā. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo saddhāvimutto." MT. 1:478.

However, he has not done so as easily as the *diṭṭhipatta*, the person attained to understanding, whose progress is easier due to his superior wisdom.[1] The fact that the one liberated by faith has destroyed only some of his cankers implies that he has advanced beyond the first path but not yet reached the final fruit, the fruition of arahatship.[2]

[3] The "body witness" (*kāyasakkhi*) is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of stream-entry to the path of arahatship, who has a predominance of the faculty of concentration and can obtain the immaterial *jhānas*. The sutta explanation reads:

> But who, O monks, is a 'Body-Witness'? Here someone has, in his own person, reached those peaceful Uncorporeal Deliverances transcending all corporeality. But, after wisely understanding all things, only some biases have reached extinction. Such a one, O monks, is called a Body-Witness.[3]

The Puggalapaññatti offers a slight variation on this phrasing: "What person is a body-witness? Here some person has, in his own person, reached the eight deliverances, and having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers are destroyed."[4] (Wr. tr.). For the sutta's "immaterial deliverances" (*āruppā vimokkhā*) the Puggalapaññatti substitutes "the eight deliverances" (*aṭṭhavimokkhā*). These eight deliverances consist of three meditative attainments pertaining to the fine material sphere (inclusive of all four lower *jhānas*), the four immaterial *jhānas*, and the attainment of cessation.[5] But though the Puggalapaññatti makes this reformulation, it should not be thought either that the achievement of all eight deliverances is necessary to become classified as a body-witness or that the achievement of the three lower deliverances is sufficient. What is both requisite and sufficient to receive the designation "body-witness" is the partial destruction of defilements coupled with the attainment of at least the lowest immaterial *jhāna*. The *Visuddhimagga Ṭīkā* states that the body-witness need only obtain one of the immaterial *jhānas*, and holds that this type becomes fivefold by way of those who obtain any of the four immaterial *jhānas* and the one who also obtains the attainment of cessation.[6]

The *Visuddhimagga* connects the body-witness with suffering as a subject of insight and concentration as a predominant faculty: "When a man brings (formations) to mind as painful and, having great tranquility, acquires the faculty of concentration, he is called a body-witness in all eight instances,"[1] i.e. from the path of stream-entry through arahatship. Its *Ṭīkā* explains that this extension of the scope of body-witness to persons on the first path and to arahats is figurative in intention and should not be taken as literal. Literally, a body-witness is found only in the intermediate six stages.

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[1] Pug.P., pp. 184-85.

[2] The *Visuddhimagga*, however, says that arahats in whom faith is predominant can also be called "liberated by faith." (PP., p. 770. Vism. p. 566). Its *Ṭīkā* points out that this remark is only intended figuratively, not literally, in the sense that for those arahats arahatship results from being *saddhāvimutta* at the moment of the fourth path. Literally such arahats would be *paññāvimutta*. Vism.T. 2:468.

[3] *Path to Deliverance*, p. 182. "Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo kāyasakkhi: Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā ekacce āsavā parikkhīṇā honti. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo kāyasakkhi." MN. 1:478.

[4] Pug.P., p. 184.

[5] DN. 3:159. MN. 2:12. Also see BMTP., pp. 484-86.

[6] Vism.T. 2:466.

> One with the eight attainments on the first path would have to be either a faith-devotee or a truth-devotee; the same person at the final fruition would be one liberated in both ways.[2] (Wr. tr.).

[4] One who is liberated in both ways (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*) is an arahat who has completely destroyed the defilements and possesses the imaterial attainments. The commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya explains the name "liberated in both ways" as meaning "through the immaterial attainment he is liberated from the material body and through the path [of arahatship] he is liberated from the mental body."[3] (Wr. tr.). The sutta defines this type of disciple thus:

> Now, who, O monks, is the one Liberated in Both Ways? Here someone has in his own person reached those peaceful Uncorporeal Deliverances transcending all corporeality. And, after wisely understanding all things, the biases have reached extinction. Such a one, O monks, is called 'Liberated in Both Ways.'[4]

The Puggalapaññatti gives basically the same formula, but replaces "immaterial deliverances" with "the eight deliverances."[5] (Wr. tr.). The same principle of interpretation that applied to the body-witness applies here: the attainment of any immaterial *jhāna*, even the lowest, is sufficient to qualify a person as both-ways liberated. The *Visuddhimagga Ṭīkā* says: "One who has attained arahatship after gaining even one [immaterial *jhāna*] is liberated in both ways."[6] (Wr. tr.).

And the Majjhima Nikāya commentary states:

> The one liberated in both ways is fivefold by way of those four who attain arahatship by comprehending formations after emerging from one or another

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[1] PP., p. 770. "Yo pana [sankhāre] dukkhato manasikaronto passaddhibahulo samādhindriyaṃ paṭilabhati, so sabbattha kāyasakkhi nāma hoti." Vism., p. 566.

[2] "Aṭṭhavimokkhalābhī pana paṭhamamaggakkhaṇe saddhānusāri vā dhammānusāri vā siyā, majjhe chasu ṭhānesu kāyasakkhi, pariyosāne ubhatobhāgavimutto." Vism.T. 2:466. The position that one with the eight attainments on the first path can be a faith-devotee or a truth-devotee conflicts with the explanation of these types in the Kīṭāgiri Sutta. However the sevenfold typology of this sutta makes no provision for a disciple of the first path who gains the immaterial *jhānas*.

[3] "Arūpasamāpattiyā rūpakāyato vimutto. Maggena nāmakāyato." MN. 2:131.

[4] *Path to Deliverance*, p. 182. "Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo ubhatobhāgavimutto? Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo ubhatobhāgavimutto." MN. 1:477.

[5] Pug.P., p. 184.

[6] "Tattha pana ekampi [arūpajjhānaṃ] laddhā arahattaṃ patto ubhatobhāgavimutto eva hoti." Vism.T. 2:466.

> of the four immaterial attainments, and non-returners who attain arahatship after emerging from [the attainment of] cessation.[1] (Wr. tr.).

[5] The "truth-devotee" (*dhammānusāri*) is a disciple on the first path in whom the faculty of wisdom is predominant. Here "dhamma" has the meaning of wisdom (*paññā*).[2] The Buddha explains the truth-devotee as follows:

> But who, O monks, is a 'Truth Devotee'? Here someone has not yet, in his person, reached those peaceful uncorporeal deliverances transcending all corporeality; but, after wisely understanding all things, have the biases reached extinction. But the teachings made known by the Perfect One, find a certain understanding in him, and he is endowed with such faculties as faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Such a one, O monks, is called a Truth-Devotee.[3]

The Puggalapaññatti defines the truth-devotee in the same way as the faith devotee, except that it substitutes wisdom for faith as the predominant faculty and as the leader and forerunner in the development of the path. It adds that when a truth devotee is established in the fruit of stream entry he becomes one attained to understanding (*diṭṭhippatta*).[4] The sutta and Abhidhamma works again differ as to emphasis, the one stressing lack of the immaterial *jhānas*, the other the ariyan stature. The *Visuddhimagga* connects the truth-devotee with the contemplation of selflessness: "When a man brings [formations] to mind as not self and having great wisdom, acquires the faculty of understanding, he becomes a Dhamma-devotee at the moment of the stream entry path.[5] Presumably, though the four immaterial *jhānas* are denied for the truth-devotee, he may have any of the four fine material *jhānas* or be a bare insight practitioner without any mundane *jhāna*.

[6] The one attained to understanding (*diṭṭhippatta*) is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels who lacks the immaterial *jhānas* and has a predominance of the wisdom faculty. The Buddha explains:

> But who, O monks, is he who has 'Attained to Understanding'? Here someone has not yet, in his own person, reached those peaceful uncorporeal deliverances transcending all corporeality; and, after wisely understanding all things, only some biases have reached extinction; but the teaching made known by the

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[1] "So catunnaṃ arūpasamāpattīnaṃ ekekato vuṭṭhāya saṃkhāre sammasitvā arahattaṃ pattānaṃ catunnaṃ, nirodhā vuṭṭhāya arahattaṃ pattā anāgāmino ca vasena pañcavidhā honti." MN.A. 3:131.

[2] PP., pp. 771. Vism., p. 566.

[3] *Path to Deliverance*, p. 183. "Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo dhammānusāri? Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīṇā honti, Tathāgatappaveditā c'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathīdaṃ saddhindriyaṃ viriyindriyaṃ satindriyaṃ samādhindriyaṃ paññindriyaṃ. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo dhammānusārī." MN. 1:479.

[4] Pug.P., p. 185.

[5] PP., p. 770. "Yo pana anattato manasikaronto vedabahulo paññindriyaṃ paṭilabhati, so sotāpattimaggakkaṇe dhammānusāri hoti." Vism., p. 566.

> Perfect One, he has fully comprehended and penetrated. Such a one, O monks, is called one who has 'Attained to Understanding'.[1]

The Puggalapaññatti defines the one attained to understanding as a person who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified by means of wisdom the *dhammas* proclaimed by the Tathāgata, and having seen with wisdom has eliminated some of his cankers.[2] He is thus the "wisdom counterpart" of the one liberated by faith, but progresses more easily than the latter by virtue of his sharper wisdom.

[7] The one liberated by wisdom (*paññāvimutta*) is an arahat who does not obtain the immaterial attainments. In the words of the sutta:

> But who, O monks, is the one Liberated by Wisdom? Here someone has not yet, in his own person, reached those peaceful Uncorporeal Deliverance transcending all corporeality. But after wisely understanding all things, have the biases reached extinction. Such a one, O monks, is called 'Liberated by Wisdom.'[3]

The Puggalapaññatti's definition merely replaces "immaterial deliverances" with "the eight deliverances."[4] Though such arahats do not reach the immaterial *jhānas* nothing is said to exclude their attainment of the lower *jhānas*. The commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya states: "The one liberated by wisdom is fivefold by way of the dry insight-worker and those four who attain arahatship after emerging from the four *jhānas*."[5] (Wr. tr.).

It should be noted that the one liberated by wisdom is contrasted not with the one liberated by faith, but with the one liberated in both ways. The issue that divides the two types of arahat is the lack or possession of the four immaterial *jhānas* and the attainment of cessation. The person liberated by faith is found at the six intermediate levels of sanctity, not at the level of arahatship. When he obtains arahatship, lacking the immaterial *jhānas*, he becomes one liberated by wisdom even though faith rather than wisdom is his predominant faculty. Similarly a meditator with predominance of concentration but lacking the immaterial attainments also becomes one liberated by wisdom when he attains arahatship. But a yogin who reaches arahatship while possessing the immaterial attainments will still be one "liberated in both ways" even if wisdom rather than concentration claims first place among his spiritual endowments. as was the case with the Venerable Sāriputta.

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[1] *Path to Deliverance*, p. 183. "Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo diṭṭhippatto? Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā ekacce āsavā parikkhīṇā honti, Tathāgatappaveditā c'assa dhammā paññāya vodiṭṭhā honti vocaritā. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo diṭṭhippatto." MN. 1:478.

[2] Pug.P., p. 185.

[3] *Path to Deliverance*, p. 182. "Katamo ca bhikkhave puggalo paññāvimutto? Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkīṇā honti. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave puggalo paññāvimutto." MN. 1:477-78.

[4] Pug.P., p. 185.

[5] "So sukkhavipassako, catūhi jhānehi vuṭṭhāya arahattaṃ pattā cattāro cāti imesaṃ vasena pañcavidhova hoti." MN.A. 3:131.

Jhāna and the Arahat

From the standpoint of their spiritual stature the seven types of noble persons can be divided into three categories. The first, which includes the faith-devotee (*saddhānusāri*) and the truth-devotee (*dhammānusāri*), consists of those on the path of stream-entry, the first of the eight ariyan persons. The second category, comprising the one liberated by faith (*saddhāvimutta*), the body-witness (*kāyasakkhi*), and the one attained to understanding (*diṭṭhippatta*), consists of those on the six intermediate levels, from the stream-enterer to one on the path of arahatship. The third category, comprising the one liberated in both ways (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*) and the one liberated by wisdom (*paññāvimutta*), consists only of arahats.

The *ubhatobhāgavimutta*, "one liberated in both ways," and the *paññāvimutta*, "one liberated by wisdom," thus represent the terms of a twofold typology of arahats into which every arahat can be fitted. The basis for distinguishing the two is the degree of their accomplishment in *jhāna*. The *ubhatobhāgavimutta* arahat experiences in his own person the "peaceful deliverances" of the immaterial sphere, the *paññāvimutta* arahat lacks this full experience of the immaterial *jhānas*. Each of these two types, according to the commentaries, again becomes fivefold. The *ubhatobhāgavimutta* is fivefold by way of those who possess the ascending four immaterial *jhānas* and the attainment of cessation, the *paññāvimutta* by way of those who reach arahatship after emerging from the four fine material *jhānas* and the dry insight meditator whose insight lacks the support of *jhāna*.

The possibility of arahatship without possession of a mundane *jhāna* has sometimes been questioned by Theravāda Buddhist scholars, but the weight of the Theravāda tradition appears to lean towards the recognition of such a possibility. We have already mentioned the *suddhavipassanāyānika*, the yogin with bare insight as his vehicle, also called the *sukkhavipassaka*, the dry insight meditator. That this kind of meditator does not already possess a *jhāna* attainment which he just neglects to use as a basis for insight seems implicit from the distinction the *Visuddhimagga* makes in its discussion of the *jhānic* level of the path:

> ... the path arisen in a bare-insight [dry insight] worker, and the path arisen in one who possesses a jhāna attainment but who has not made the jhāna the basis for insight,... are paths of the first jhāna only.[1]

Here, when the dry-insight worker is distinguished from the *jhāna*-attainer who does not use his *jhāna* to develop insight, the clear implication is that the former does not have a basic *jhāna*. If he did there would be no reason to speak of the two as separate cases.

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1. PP., p. 779. "…sukkhavipassakassa uppannamaggo pi samāpattilābhino jhānaṃ pādakaṃ akatvā uppannamaggo pi… paṭhamajjhānikā va honti." Vism., p. 573.

Further evidence for the existence of arahats lacking mundane *jhāna* is provided by the Susīma Sutta together with its commentaries.[1] In this sutta the monk Susīma is perplexed about a group of monks who claim to have reached *aññā*, the final knowledge of arahatship, yet deny possessing supernormal powers or the peaceful deliverances of the immaterial sphere. To the question how they can be arahats without these attainments they reply: "We are liberated by wisdom" (*paññāvimuttā kho mayaṃ*). Confused by this answer, Susīma goes to the Buddha for clarification. The Buddha declares: "Susīma, first the knowledge of the structure of phenomena arises, afterwards the knowledge of *nibbāna*."[2] (Wr. tr.). Then he explains the impermanence, suffering, and selflessness of the five aggregates. He shows how contemplation of the three characteristics leads to dispassion, detachment and emancipation, elucidates the law of dependent arising, and convinces Susīma that knowledge of the causal law can issue in liberation without requiring any possession of supernormal powers or the immaterial attainments.[3]

It is true that in the sutta itself a lack of *jhāna* is not ascribed to the group of *paññāvimutta* arahats. The text only mentions the absence of the five *abhiññās* and the *āruppas*. But the exegetical sources on the sutta fill in the gap, showing that these arahats reached their goal without mundane *jhāna* of absorption level. The commentary rephrases the monks' reply "We are liberated by wisdom" to make explicit the fact that they are dry insight meditators: "'We are liberated by wisdom, friend': we are contemplatives, dry insight workers, liberated by wisdom alone."[4] (Wr. tr.). The commentary explains the knowledge of the structure of phenomena (*dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa*) as insight knowledge and the knowledge of *nibbāna* (*nibbāne ñāṇa*) as path knowledge. It states that the Buddha gave the long disquisition on insight "for the purpose of showing the arising of knowledge even without concentration."[5] (Wr. tr.). The subcommentary makes the sutta's purport still clearer by explaining the commentary's phrase "even without concentration" as meaning even without concentration previously accomplished, reaching the characteristic of "serenity" (Wr. tr.), adding that "this is said in reference to the *vipassanāyānika*."[6] From all this it follows that these arahats, attaining emancipation by wisdom without prior concentration of the serenity level, lacked mundane *jhāna*. As arahats, however, they would necessarily have reached the supramundane *jhāna* of the paths and fruits, with constant access to the *jhāna* of the attainment of fruition.

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1. SN. 2:119-23.

2. "Pubbe kho Susīma dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇaṃ pacchā nibbāne ñāṇaṃ." SN. 2:124.

3. *Ibid.* 2:124-27.

4. "Avuso mayaṃ nijjhānakā sukkhavipassaka paññāmatten'eva vimuttā ti dasseti." SN.A. 2:117. N.B. The word *nijjhānaka* is ambiguous: the word *nijjhāna* is used in the suttas to mean reflection or contemplation and we here follow that usage by rendering its derivative as "contemplative"; but the purport might also be "lacking *jhāna*," as the prefix *nir* sometimes has a privative as well as augmentative meaning.

5. "Vinā pi samādhiṃ evaṃ ñāṇuppattidassanatthaṃ." *Ibid.*

6. "Samatha lakkhaṇappattaṃ purimasiddhaṃ vinā pi samādhinti vipassanā yānikaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ." SN.T. 2:125.

In contrast to the *paññāvimutta* arahats, those arahats who are *ubhatobhāgavimutta* enjoy a twofold liberation. Through their mastery over the formless attainments they are liberated from the material body (*rūpakāya*), capable of dwelling in this very life in the meditations corresponding to the immaterial planes of existence; through their attainment of arahatship they are liberated from the mental body (*nāmakāya*), presently free from all defilements and sure of final emancipation from future becoming.[1] *Paññāvimutta* arahats only possess the second of these two liberations.

The double liberation of the *ubhatobhāgavimutta* arahat should not be confused with another double liberation frequently mentioned in the suttas in connection with arahatship. This second pair of liberations, called *cetovimutti paññāvimutti*, "liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," is shared in common by all arahats. It appears in the stock passage descriptive of arahatship: "With the destruction of the cankers he here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, realizing it for himself with direct knowledge."[2] That this twofold liberation belongs to *paññāvimutta* arahats as well as to those who are *ubhatobhāgavimutta* is made clear by the Putta Sutta, where the stock passage is used for two types of arahats called the "white lotus recluse" and the "red lotus recluse":

> How, monks, is a person a white lotus recluse? Here, monks, with the destruction of the cankers a monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. Yet he does not dwell experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, monks, a person is a white lotus recluse.
>
> And how, monks, is a person a red lotus recluse? Here, monks, with the destruction of the cankers a monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. And he dwells experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, monks, a person is a red lotus recluse.[3] (Wr. tr.).

Since the description of these two types coincides with that of *paññāvimutta* and *ubhatobhāgavimutta* the two pairs may be identified, the white lotus recluse with the *paññāvimutta*, the red lotus recluse with the *ubhatobhāgavimutta*. Yet the *paññāvimutta* arahat, while lacking the experience of the eight deliverances, still has both *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti*.

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[1] Vism.T. 2:468.

[2] See Chapter VII, p. 335.

[3] "Kathañca bhikkhave puggalo samaṇapuṇḍarīko hoti? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭh'eva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati, no ca kho aṭṭhavimokhe kāyena phassitvā viharati. Evaṃ kho bhikkhave puggalo samaṇapuṇḍarīko hoti.

Kathañca bhikkhave puggalo samaṇapadumo hoti? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭh'eva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati, aṭṭha ca vimokhe kāyena phassitvā viharati. Evaṃ kho bhikkhave puggalo samaṇapadumo hoti." AN. 2:87.

Other suttas help fill in the meaning of *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti*. The latter term is almost invariably used in reference to arahatship, signifying the arahat's permanent deliverance from ignorance through his full penetration of the Four Noble Truths. The term *cetovimutti* has a more varied application. In some places it signifies the temporary release of the mind from defilements given by attainments in serenity meditation, as when the Mahāvedalla Sutta speaks of the fourth *jhāna*, the four *Brahmavihāras*, and the base of nothingness as forms of *cetovimutti*.[1] But elsewhere *cetovimutti* is held up as the final goal of the Buddhist meditative discipline. In this context it is usually qualified by the adjective "unshakeable" (*akuppā*). Thus the Mahāvedalla Sutta calls "unshakeable liberation of mind" the chief of all liberations of mind.[2] After attaining enlightenment the Buddha declares: "Unshakeable is the liberation of my mind."[3] And elsewhere he says: "This is the goal of the holy life, monks, this is its essence, this is its consummation – the unshakeable liberation of the mind."[4] (Wr. tr.).

When *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti* are joined together and described as "cankerless" (*anāsava*), they can be taken to indicate two aspects of the arahat's deliverance. *Cetovimutti* signifies the release of his mind from craving and its associated defilements, *paññāvimutti* the release from ignorance: "With the fading away of lust there is liberation of mind, with the fading away of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom."[5] (Wr. tr.). "As he sees and understands thus his mind is liberated from the canker of sensual desire, from the canker of existence, from the canker of ignorance"[6] (Wr. tr.) – here release from the first two cankers can be understood as *cetovimutti*, release from the canker of ignorance as *paññāvimutti*. In the commentaries *cetovimutti* is identified with the concentration factor in the fruit of arahatship, *paññāvimutti* with the wisdom factor:

> By the word 'mind' the concentration concomitant with the fruit of arahatship is meant, by the word 'wisdom' the concomitant wisdom is meant. The concentration there is called 'liberation of mind' because it has liberated the mind from lust, the wisdom is called 'liberation by wisdom' because it has liberated the mind from ignorance.[7] (Wr. tr.).

Since every arahat reaches arahatship through the Noble Eightfold Path, he must have attained supramundane *jhāna* in the form of right concentration, the eighth factor of the path, defined as the four *jhānas*. This *jhāna* remains with him as the concentration of the fruition attainment of arahatship, which occurs at the level of supramundane *jhāna* corresponding to that of his path. Thus he always stands in possession of at least the supramundane *jhāna* of fruition, called the *anāsavaṃ cetovimutti*, "cankerless liberation of mind." However this consideration does not reflect back on his mundane attainments, requiring that every arahat possesses mundane *jhāna*.

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[1] MN. l:296-98.

[2] *Ibid*. 1:298.

[3] "Akuppā me cetovimutti." SN. 5:423.

[4] "Yā ca kho ayaṃ bhikkhave akuppā cetovimutti etad atthaṃ idaṃ bhikkhave brahmacariyaṃ etad sāraṃ etaṃ pariyosānaṃ." MN. 1:l97.

[5] "… Rāgavirāgā cetovimutti avijjāvirāgā paññāvimutti." AN. l:61.

[6] MN. 1:183-84.

[7] "Ettha cetovacanena arahattaphala sampayutto va samādhi, paññāvacanena taṃsampayuttā paññā vuttā. Tattha ca samādhi rāgato vimuttattā cetovimutti, paññā avijjāya vimuttattā paññā vimuttīti veditabbo." MN.A. l:169.

Nevertheless, though early Buddhism tends to acknowledge the possibility of a dry-visioned arahatship, the attitude prevails that *jhānas* are still desirable attributes in an arahat. They are of value not only prior to final attainment, as a foundation for insight, but retain their value even afterwards as well. The value of *jhāna* in the stage of arahatship, when all spiritual training has been completed, is twofold. One concerns the arahat's inner experience, the other his outer significance as a representative of the Buddha's dispensation.

On the side of inner experience the *jhānas* are valued as providing the arahat with a "blissful dwelling here and now" (*diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāra*).[1] The suttas often show arahats attaining to *jhāna* and the Buddha himself declares the four *jhānas* to be figuratively a kind of *nibbāna* in this present life.[2] With respect to levels and factors there is no difference between the mundane *jhānas* of an arahat and those of a non-arahat. The difference concerns their function. For non-arahats the mundane *jhānas* constitute wholesome *kamma*; they are deeds with a potential to produce results, to precipitate rebirth in a corresponding realm of existence. But in the case of an arahat mundane *jhāna* is no more *kamma*. Since he has eradicated ignorance and craving, the roots of *kamma*, his actions leave no residue; they have no capacity to generate results. For him the *jhānic* consciousness is, in Abhidhamma terms, a *kiriya* consciousness, a mere functional occurrence which comes and goes and once gone disappears without a trace.[3]

The value of the *jhānas* extends beyond the confines of the arahat's personal experience and testifies to the spiritual efficacy of the Buddha's dispensation itself. From the evidence of the texts the early Buddhists regarded the *jhānas* as ornamentations of the yogin, testimonies to the accomplishment of the spiritually perfect man and the effectiveness of the teaching he follows. A stock passage used to commend a worthy monk reads: "He gains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four *jhānas* pertaining to the higher consciousness, blissful dwellings here and now."[4] (Wr. tr.). The Buddha calls this ability to gain the *jhānas* at will a quality that makes a monk an elder. When accompanied by several other spiritual accomplishments the same ability is said to be an essential quality of "a recluse who graces recluses" (*samaṇesu samaṇasukhumālo*) and of a monk who can move unobstructed in the four directions.[5] Having ready access to the four *jhānas* makes an elder dear and agreeable, respected and esteemed by his fellow monks.[1] Facility in gaining the *jhānas* is one of the eight qualities of a completely inspiring monk (*samantapāsādika bhikkhu*) perfect in all respects; it is also one of the eleven foundations of faith (*saddhāpadānāni*).[2] It is significant that in all these lists of qualities the last item is always the attainment of arahatship, "the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," showing that all desirable qualities in a bhikkhu culminate in arahatship.

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[1] See MN. 1:33.

[2] See AN. 4:453-54.

[3] Nārada, *Manual.*, pp. 43-45.

[4] "Catunnaṃ jhānānaṃ abhicetasikānaṃ diṭṭhadhammasukhavihārānaṃ nikāmalābhī hoti akicchalābhī akasiralābhī…" AN. 2:23.

[5] AN. 3:131, 135.

On one occasion, when a number of chief disciples met together in a lovely Salwood at Gosinga on a beautiful moonlit night, the discussion arose among them as to what type of monk could illumine that Salwood. The Venerable Revata answered that it would be a monk who delights in solitary meditation, who is delighted by solitary meditation, who is intent on mental tranquility. The Venerable Sāriputta replied that it would be a monk who could abide in whatever meditative attainment he wanted in the morning, midday, and evening.[3] Sāriputta himself is extolled for his ability to enter the four *jhānas*, the four *āruppas*, and the attainment of cessation without giving rise to the thoughts "I am attaining," "I have attained" or "I have emerged." The reason he can avoid such thoughts is that, as an arahat, he has uprooted all "I"-making, "mine"-making, and tendencies to conceit.[4] Elsewhere the Buddha praises Sāriputta for his skill in entering each of the nine attainments, analyzing them into their constituent formations, and contemplating them with a mind unconfined by attraction or repulsion.[5]

The higher the degree of his mastery over the meditative attainments, the higher the esteem in which an arahat monk is held and the more praiseworthy his accomplishment is considered to be. On one occasion the Buddha met with three arahat bhikkhus – the Venerable Anuruddha, Nandiya, and Kimbila – and elicited from them the admission that they were all capable of attaining the four *jhānas*, the four *āruppas*, cessation, and the fruit of arahatship. After this discussion the Buddha declared that if all the people in the world were to recollect these three young men with a mind of confidence, it would lead to their welfare and happiness for a long time to come. He concludes with the words: "See how these three young men are faring for the welfare of the many folk, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of gods and men."[6] (Wr. tr.).

Though the *paññā-vimutta* and *ubhatobhāgavimutta* arahats are equal with respect to release from suffering, special regard extends to the latter, and the greater his facility in meditation the higher the regard. Thus the Buddha says:

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[1] *Ibid.* 114.

[2] AN. 4:314-15. AN. 5:337.

[3] MN. 1:213-15.

[4] SN. 3:235-38.

[5] MN. Sutta No. 111.

[6] "Passa… ete tayo kulaputtā bahujanahitāya paṭipannā bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya, atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānanti." MN. 1:211.

> When a monk has mastered these eight deliverances in direct order, in reverse order, and in both orders, when he can attain to and emerge from any one of them, whenever he chooses, wherever he chooses and for as long as he chooses – when too, with the destruction of the cankers, he enters and abides in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, after realizing it for himself here and now through direct knowledge – then such a monk is called one liberated in both ways. There is no other liberation in both ways higher and more excellent than this liberation in both ways.[1] (Wr. tr.).

The highest respect goes to those monks who possess not only liberation in both ways but the six *abhiññās*, the first five the outcome of the eight attainments of serenity, the sixth, the supramundane *abhiññā* of arahatship, the outcome of insight. The Buddha declares that a monk endowed with the six *abhiññās* is worthy of gifts and hospitality, worthy of offerings and reverential salutations, a supreme field of merit for the world.[2] In the period after the Buddha's *parinibbāna*, the Venerable Ānanda was asked whether the Buddha had designated a successor, to which he replied in the negative. He also denied that the Sangha had selected a single monk to be its leader. However, he said, there were monks in the Order who were regarded with special reverence and esteem, and to whom other monks looked for guidance and support. What qualified a monk to give guidance to others was endowment with ten qualities: moral virtue, learning, contentment, mastery over the four *jhānas*, the five mundane *abhiññās*, and attainment of the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom.[3] Perhaps it was because he was extolled by the Buddha for his facility in the meditative attainments and the *abhiññās* that the Venerable Mahākassapa assumed the presidency of the first great Buddhist council held in Rājagaha after the Buddha's passing away.[4]

In the Ambaṭṭha Sutta the Buddha recites a verse praising the man endowed with knowledge and conduct (*vijjācaraṇasampanna*): "The *kshatriya* is the best among men for those who look to lineage, but one endowed with knowledge and conduct is best among gods and men."[5] (Wr. tr.). Conduct (*caraṇa*), he explains, includes moral discipline, sense restraint, mindfulness and discernment, contentment, solitary living, the abandonment of the five hindrances, and finally, as the outcome of these practices, the attainment of the four *jhānas*. Knowledge (*vijjā*) consists in insight-knowledge, the knowledge of the mind-made body, the five mundane *abhiññās*, and the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. The Buddha concludes his exposition by saying of a bhikkhu who has fulfilled this training:

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[1] "Yato kho Ānanda bhikkhu ime aṭṭha vimokhe anulomaṃ pi samāpajjati, paṭilomaṃ pi samāpajjati, anuloma-paṭilomaṃ pi samāpajjati, yath'icchakaṃ yad icchikaṃ yāvad icchakaṃ samāpajjati pi vuṭṭhāti pi, āsavānaṃ ca khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññā-vimuttiṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati, ayaṃ vuccati Ānanda bhikkhu ubhatobhāga-vimutto, imāya ca Ānanda ubhato-bhāgavimuttiyā aññā ubhato-bhāga-vimutti uttaritarā vā paṇītatarā vā n'atthī ti." DN. 2:71.

[2] AN. 3:280-81.

[3] MN. 3:11-12.

[4] SN. 3:209-214.

[5] "Khattiyo seṭṭho janetasmiṃ ye gotta paṭisārino/Vijjācaraṇa-sampanno so seṭṭho deva-mānuse." DN. 1:99.

> This bhikkhu is called ‘endowed with knowledge’, ‘endowed with conduct’, ‘endowed with knowledge and conduct’. There is no other endowment with knowledge and conduct higher or more excellent than this endowment with knowledge and conduct.[1] (Wr. tr.).

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[1] “Ayaṃ vuccati Ambaṭṭha bhikkhu vijjā-sampanno iti pi caraṇasampanno iti pi vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno iti pi. Imāya ca Ambaṭṭha vijjā-caraṇa-sampadāya aññā vijjāsampadā caraṇa-sampadā uttaritarā vā paṇītatarā vā n’atthi.” DN. 1:100.

Conclusion

The *jhānas* are an important aspect of training in the contemplative system of Theravāda Buddhism, representing the most eminent form of concentration (*samādhi*). They enter into the discipline as the training in the higher consciousness (*adhicittasikkhā*), into the Noble Eightfold Path as right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), and directly or indirectly relate to all the thirty-seven training principles leading to enlightenment. Of the two principal types of Buddhist meditation, serenity meditation (*samathabhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*vipassanābhāvanā*), they fall on the side of serenity, though the mental unification they induce makes them also a helpful instrument for developing insight.

The purpose of this dissertation has been to investigate the function performed by the *jhānas* in the structure of the Buddhist path to liberation. We approached this topic in terms of two specific problems: [1] to understand how the *jhānas* bring about a progressive purification of consciousness and a focussing of the power of awareness; and [2] to determine the precise way and extent to which this mental unification effected by the *jhānas* facilitates the attainment of *nibbāna*, the ultimate goal of Buddhist meditation.

Our account of the function of the *jhānas* was based upon the recognition that the *jhānas* can occur at two levels, one mundane (*lokiya*) and the other supramundane (*lokuttara*). As mundane they pertain to the preliminary stages of the path leading up to insight where they can be developed to any of eight degrees, the four fine material *jhānas* (*rūpajjhāna*) and the four immaterial *jhānas* (*arūpajjhāna*). As supramundane they pertain to the four paths (*magga*) and fruits (*phala*), the stages of enlightenment and liberation leading to *nibbāna*, the end of suffering.

The mundane *jhānas* are not absolutely necessary for all practitioners, but on account of the powerful calm they induce the Buddha frequently commends them to his disciples. The Buddhist training progresses through three stages – morality, concentration, and wisdom. Wisdom leads directly to liberation, but it can only arise in the mind that has been collected and purified by concentration. *Jhāna*, as a superior form of concentration, helps to produce this purification needed as a base for wisdom.

We clarified the way the *jhānas* work to purify the mind by drawing upon the analytical approach to mental processes developed in the psychology of Theravāda Buddhism. From this perspective we saw the mind viewed as an ever-changing continuum of evanescent mental events, each event in turn being composed of a multiplicity of factors. Certain factors cause defilement and distraction, others bring about purification and inner unity. By developing the mind in deliberate ways according to the system of meditation it is possible to pit the latter factors against the former and eventually overcome them. The *jhānas* are the fruits of this conquest.

The factors which obstruct mental clarity are classed as the five hindrances – sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. A meditator aspiring to the *jhānas*, after purifying his moral discipline, cutting off impediments, and receiving a suitable subject from a teacher, must first overcome the hindrances. The texts prescribe various methods for achieving this, some designed specifically for the individual defilements, others such as general mindfulness applicable to all the hindrances at once. As he persists in his practice of meditation the meditator strengthens five positive mental factors – applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness. These five serve to counteract the hindrances and unify the mind on its object. When the hindrances are suppressed, there appears a luminous mental replica of the meditation subject called the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāganimitta*), marking the attainment of "access concentration" (*upacārasamādhi*) where the mind stands at the threshold of *jhāna*. With further strengthening of the *jhāna* factors the meditator passes to *appanāsamādhi*, full absorption. The initial level of absorption is the first *jhāna*, which is endowed with the five *jhāna* factors as its defining constituents.

After mastering the first *jhāna* a meditator can go further in the direction of serenity by attaining the second, third, and fourth *jhānas*. Progress from one *jhāna* to another, we saw, is handled by the Theravāda expositors with the same psychological rigor they apply to the initial attainment. The ascent through the four fine material *jhānas* involves the successive elimination of coarser mental factors. In each case the meditator reflects that the *jhāna* he has mastered is endangered by its proximity to the stage immediately below and by its own inherent grossness, then he aspires to the higher stage as more serene, peaceful, and sublime. Thus he eliminates applied and sustained thought to reach the second *jhāna*, rapture to reach the third, and happiness to reach the fourth. The factors that remain function as the constituting factors of the *jhāna* – rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness for the second, happiness and one-pointedness for the third, and neutral feeling and one-pointedness for the fourth. If the meditator's faculties are not sharp, he may have to overcome applied and sustained thought separately. To account for this possibility the Abhidhamma, with its penchant for precise analysis, includes a scheme of five *jhānas* covering the same range of meditative experience.

After achieving mastery over the four fine material *jhānas*, an ardent meditator can continue to refine his concentration by attaining the four immaterial *jhānas*: the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception. Whereas the purification of consciousness effected by the lower *jhānas* takes place by means of the successive elimination of mental factors, the purification effected by progress through the immaterial *jhānas* occurs through a surmounting of objects. All four immaterial states have the same factorial constitution, identical with that of the fourth *jhāna* i.e. neutral feeling and one-pointedness. They differ essentially with respect to their objective basis, taking in order successively more subtle objects. The first objectifies the infinity of space, the second the consciousness pertaining to the base of boundless space, the third the non-existent aspect of the same consciousness, and the fourth the mental aggregates belonging to the base of nothingness. This last *āruppa*, the base of neither perception nor non-perception, marks the utmost limit in the unification of consciousness and the highest degree to which serenity can be pursued.

If he so desires, a meditator who has thoroughly mastered the eight attainments can develop certain supernormal modes of knowledge. These, known as the *abhiññās*, are five in number: the knowledge of the modes of supernormal power, the knowledge of the divine ear-element, the knowledge of penetrating others' minds, the knowledge of recollecting previous lives, and the knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings. These *abhiññās* are all mundane, the products of concentration. Though not essential to the path, they are still embellishments of an accomplished meditator, useful if handled with understanding and applied with compassion. Along with them other kinds of higher knowledge are sometimes mentioned. Beyond these lies a sixth *abhiññā*, the "knowledge of the destruction of the cankers," the knowledge of liberation resulting from insight.

The mundane *jhānas* do not destroy the defilements but only suppress them. The type of purification they produce is thus only temporary, suitable as a basis for insight but incapable by itself of leading to liberation. A meditator who has reached the eight attainments will be reborn according to his level of *jhānic* accomplishment. If he reaches the four lower *jhānas* he will be reborn in the fine material world, if he reaches the immaterial *jhānas* he will be reborn in the immaterial world. In any case he remains in bondage to *saṃsāra* and is not yet free from suffering. Therefore *jhāna*, we showed, is not sufficient for reaching the ultimate goal.

To obtain liberation from the recurring cycle of rebirths what is required is wisdom (*paññā*), culminating in the supramundane wisdom of the noble paths that eradicates defilements. Since the root-cause of bondage and suffering is ignorance about the true nature of phenomena, wisdom, which uncovers the true nature of phenomena, is the means to freedom. Wisdom comes in two stages: first the wisdom of insight (*vipassanāñāṇa*) which is the direct seeing of the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness in material and mental formations, then the wisdom of the noble paths (*maggañāṇa*) which sees *nibbāna* and penetrates the Four Noble Truths.

The complete course of development culminating in deliverance has been divided into seven stages of purification (*satta visuddhi*). The first two – purification of morality and purification of mind – coincide with the training in moral discipline and concentration. The remaining five – purification of view, purification by overcoming doubt, purification by knowledge of the right and wrong paths, purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and purification by knowledge and vision – pertain to the development of wisdom. The wisdom of insight develops especially through the purification by knowledge and vision of the way; it culminates in the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which make up purification by knowledge and vision.

The four paths are designated the path of stream-entry, the path of the once-returner, the path of the non-returner, and the path of arahatship. These paths are occasions of enlightenment experience which penetrate by direct knowledge the Four Noble Truths. They exercise the function of eradicating the defilements or "fetters" that cause bondage to *saṃsāra*, reducing thereby the duration of the round of rebirths. Each successive path eliminates (or attenuates) a subtler layer of defilements, until with the fourth path all the defilements are cut off and the production of future rebirths stopped. The paths lead immediately to their fruits, resultant states of consciousness that enjoy the happiness of *nibbāna* made possible by the work of the paths.

The consideration that mundane *jhāna* does not suffice for attaining liberation but has to be supplemented by wisdom brought us to our second area of investigation, the relation of the *jhānas* to the attainment of the paths and the states of deliverance that result from them. In particular we sought to resolve the disputed question whether or not the *jhānas* are needed for reaching *nibbāna*. The key to resolving this controversy we found to be the distinction, implicit in the suttas and made explicit in the Abhidhamma and commentaries, between mundane and supramundane *jhāna*. Mundane *jhāna* is the most eminent type of concentration, but its attainment is not indispensable for all meditators in order to reach the paths and fruits. The Theravāda tradition divides meditators into two types according to the way they arrive at the supramundane path. One is the *samathayānika*, the practitioner who makes serenity his vehicle, the other is the *vipassanāyānika*, the practitioner who makes bare insight his vehicle. The former first develops serenity to the level of one of the eight attainments or their access, then uses that serenity as his base of concentration in order to develop insight. The latter, also known as the dry insight worker (*sukkhavipassaka*), proceeds directly to insight-contemplation on conditioned phenomena, producing a mobile momentary concentration as a concomitant of his contemplation without initially developing serenity to the level of *jhānic* intensity.

For the dry insight meditator, we saw, mundane *jhāna* is dispensable, but for the meditator of the serenity vehicle it plays two vitally important roles: first it provides him with a foundation of calm conducive to developing insight, second it serves as a readily available subject to be investigated with insight in order to see the three characteristics of existence. In the first capacity the *jhāna* is called the basic *jhāna* (*pādakajjhāna*), in the second it is called the comprehended *jhāna* (*sammasitajjhāna*).

For meditators of both vehicles, however, *jhāna* is attained when they reach the supramundane paths and fruits. The paths and fruits, according to the Pāli texts, always occur at a level of *jhānic* absorption and thus are considered forms of *jhāna*. Since to reach deliverance all practitioners have to pass through the same paths and fruits regardless of their means of approach, *jhāna* of the supramundane kind enters into the experience of every meditator who arrives at the path. It belongs as much to the path of the one following the vehicle of pure insight as it does to the path of the one following the vehicle of serenity. *Jhāna* of this kind occurs as the right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*) of the Noble Eightfold Path, defined by the Buddha with the formula for the four *jhānas*.

Thus the answer to the question whether *jhāna* is needed to reach *nibbāna* is clear, settled by the recognition of two kinds of *jhāna*: mundane *jhāna* is helpful but not absolutely necessary, supramundane *jhāna* is essential but does not necessarily presuppose mundane *jhāna*. It results from insight either alone or in combination with mundane *jhāna*.

The supramundane *jhānas* occur in the same degrees as the mundane, the four of the suttanta scheme and the five of the Abhidhamma scheme. Each has the *jhāna* factors appropriate to its particular level of absorption. Nevertheless, we found that certain significant differences separate the two types of *jhāna*. The mundane *jhānas* merely suppress defilements, the supramundane eradicate them. The mundane remain in the orbit of the round of rebirths, the supramundane dismantle the round. The mundane involve a predominance of serenity, the supramundane a balance of serenity with wisdom. The mundane take an idea or image for object, the supramundane the unconditioned reality, *nibbāna*.

One question that has arisen is what determines the *jhānic* level of the paths and fruits, but the Theravāda tradition has not settled this with unanimity. Some elders hold that it is the basic *jhāna* (*pādakajjhāna*), some that it is the comprehended *jhāna* (*sammasitajjhāna*), still others that it depends on the meditator's choice. The *jhānic* level of the fruit, however, always conforms to that of the path. Each noble person of the four levels retains access to supramundane *jhāna* as the attainment of fruition (*phalasamāpatti*) appropriate to his level. Thus the four noble persons are always capable of entering supramundane *jhāna* as a way of experiencing bliss and peace here and now. In addition non-returners and arahats who have mastered the eight attainments can enter a special meditative attainment called cessation (*nirodhasamāpatti*), reached by alternating the mundane *jhānas* with insight up the eight degrees to the point where the mental process stops.

One final problem that remained concerned the relation of the noble persons (*ariyapuggala*) to the mundane accomplishment of *jhāna*. This problem we addressed through an ancient classification of the noble persons into seven types on the basis of their dominant faculties. Those on the path of stream-entry divide into two – the faith-follower (*saddhānusāri*) and the truth-follower (*dhammānusāri*) – according to whether they give prominence to faith or wisdom. These become, respectively, the one liberated by faith (*saddhāvimutta*) and the one attained to understanding (*diṭṭhipatta*) in the six intermediate stages; one who gains the immaterial *jhānas* is classified separately as a body-witness (*kāyasakkhi*). Arahats, at the last stage, again divide into two: those who obtain the immaterial attainments are called liberated in both ways (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*), those who do not obtain them are called those liberated by wisdom (*paññāvimutta*). For these latter any of the three faculties – faith, concentration, or wisdom – can be dominant. All that keeps them in this class is lack of the immaterial *jhānas*. They may have any of the four *jhānas* or none at all.

Doubt has sometimes been cast on the possibility of arahatship without *jhāna*. But we found that although all arahats possess the *jhāna* of their supramundane fruition, they are not all regarded as having mundane *jhāna*. Theravāda tradition recognizes a class of dry-visioned arahats who reach their goal by pure insight without *jhāna*, remaining devoid of mundane *jhāna* even afterwards. Nevertheless, though arahatship without mundane *jhāna* is possible, we saw that the Pāli tradition, beginning with the suttas ascribed to the Buddha himself, regards the ability to gain the four *jhānas* without strain or difficulty as a valuable asset of an arahat. The acquisition of the *jhānas* is valued both as a personal accomplishment and as a testimony to the spiritual efficacy of the Buddha's dispensation. A similar high regard extends to the achievement of the five mundane *abhiññās*, while the highest praise goes to *ubhatobhāgavimutta* arahats who have mastered both the eight deliverances and the five *abhiññās*.

The gradations in the veneration given to arahats on the basis of their mundane spiritual achievements implies something about the value-system of Theravāda Buddhism. It suggests that while final liberation may be the ultimate and most important value, it is not the sole value even in the spiritual domain. Alongside it, as embellishments rather than alternatives, stand mastery over the range of the mind and mastery over the sphere of the knowable. The first is accomplished by the attainment of the eight mundane *jhānas*, the second by the attainment of the *abhiññās*. Together, final liberation adorned with this twofold mastery is esteemed as the highest and most desirable way of actualizing the ultimate goal.

Appendix 1

The Thirty-seven Constituents of Enlightenment (*sattatiṃsa bodhipakkhiyadhammā*)

I. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattaro satipaṭṭhānā*)

1. Contemplation of the body as a foundation of mindfulness (*kayānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*)
2. Contemplation of feelings as a foundation of mindfulness (*vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*)
3. Contemplation of states of mind as a foundation of mindfulness (*cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*)
4. Contemplation of mental objects as a foundation of mindfulness (*dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*)

II. The Four Right Endeavors (*cattāro sammappadhānā*)

1. The effort to prevent unarisen evil states (*anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya vāyāma*)
2. The effort to abandon arisen evil states (*uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya vāyāma*)
3. The effort to arouse unarisen wholesome states (*anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya vāyāma*)
4. The effort to increase arisen wholesome states (*uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ bhiyyobhāvāya vāyāma*)

III. The Four Bases of Success (*cattāro iddhipādā*)

1. The base of success consisting in zeal (*chandiddhipādā*)
2. The base of success consisting in energy (*viriyiddhipādā*)
3. The base of success consisting in consciousness (*cittiddhipādā*)
4. The base of success consisting in inquiry (*vīmaṃsiddhipādā*)

IV. The Five Spiritual Faculties (*pañcindriyāni*)

1. The faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*)
2. The faculty of energy (*viriyindriya*)
3. The faculty of mindfulness (*satindriya*)
4. The faculty of concentration (*samādhindriya*)
5. The faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*)

V. The Five Spiritual Powers (*pañca balāni*)

1. The power of faith (*saddhābala*)
2. The power of energy (*viriyabala*)
3. The power of mindfulness (*satibala*)
4. The power of concentration (*samādhibala*)
5. The power of wisdom (*paññābala*)

VI. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅgā*)

1. The mindfulness factor of enlightenment (*satisambojjhaṅgā*)
2. The investigation of phenomena factor of enlightenment (*dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅgā*)
3. The energy factor of enlightenment (*viriyasambojjhaṅgā*)
4. The rapture factor of enlightenment (*pītisambojjhaṅgā*)
5. The tranquility factor of enlightenment (*passaddhisambojjhaṅgā*)
6. The concentration factor of enlightenment (*samādhisambojjhaṅgā*
7. The equanimity factor of enlightenment (*upekkhāsambojjhaṅgā*)

VII. The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgikamgga*)

1. Right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*)
2. Right intention (*sammāsaṃkappa*)
3. Right speech (*sammāvācā*)
4. Right action (*sammākammanta*)
5. Right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*)
6. Right effort (*sammāvāyāma*)
7. Right mindfulness (*sammāsati*)
8. Right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*)[1]

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[1] DN. 2:120. MN. 2:11-12.

Appendix 2

Forty Subjects of Meditation[1]

Subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*)	6 Temperaments (*chacaritāni*)	3 Concentrations (*tayo bhāvanāyo*)			3 Signs (*tīni nimittāni*)			4 *Jhānas*		
The Totalities (*kasiṇa*)										
Earth kasina (*paṭhavi-kasiṇa*)	All	P.	Ac.	Ab.	P.	Le.	Cp.	1st	to	4th[2]
Water kasina (*āpo-kasiṇa*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Fire kasina (*tejo-kasiṇa*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Air kasina (*vāyo-kasiṇa*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Blue kasina (*nīla-kasiṇa*)	Hating	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Yellow kasina (*pīta-kasiṇa*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Red kasina (*lohita-kasiṇa*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
White kasina (*odāta-kasiṇa*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Light kasina (*āloka-kasiṇa*)	All	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Limited space kasina (*ākāsa-kasiṇa*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Ten Kinds of Foulness (*dasa asubha*):										
The bloated (*uddhumātaka*)	Lustful	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
The livid (*vinīlaka*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
Festering (*vipubbaka*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
Cut-up (*vicchiddaka*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		

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[1] Vism., pp. 89-90.

[2] Note. Key to abbreviations at end of this appendix.

Subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*)	6 Temperaments (*chacaritāni*)	3 Concentrations (*tayo bhāvanāyo*)			3 Signs (*tīni nimittāni*)			4 *Jhānas*		
The gnawed (*vikkhāyitaka*)	Lustful	P.	Ac.	Ab.	P.	Le.	Cp.	1st		
The scattered (*vikkhittaka*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
The hacked and scattered (*hata-vikkhittaka*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
The bleeding (*lohitaka*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
The worm-infested (*pulavaka*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
A skeleton (*aṭṭhika*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"		
Ten Kinds of Recollections (*dasa anussatiyo*):										
Recol. of Buddha (*buddhānussati*)	Faithful	"	"		"	"		No	*jhāna*	
Recol. of Dhamma (*dhammānussati*)	"	"	"		"	"		"	"	
Recol. of Sangha (*sanghānussati*)	"	"	"		"	"		"	"	
Recol. of virtue (*sīlānussati*)	"	"	"		"	"		"	"	
Recol. of generosity (*cāgānussati*)	"	"	"		"	"		"	"	
Recol. of deities (*devatānussati*)	"	"	"		"	"		"	"	
Recol. of peace (*upasamānussati*)	Intelligent	"	"		"	"		"	"	
Recol. of death (*maraṇānussati*)	"	"	"		"	"		"	"	
Mindfulness of body (*kāya-gatāsati*)	Lustful	"	"	"	"	"	"	1st	"	
Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*)	Deluded & Speculative	"	"	"	"	"	"	1st	to	4th
Four Divine Abidings (*cattāro brahmavihārā*):										
Lovingkindness (*mettā*)	Hating	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	3rd
Compassion (*karunā*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Gladness (*muditā*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Equanimity (*upekkhā*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"			4th

Subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*)	6 Temperaments (*chacaritāni*)	3 Concentrations (*tayo bhāvanāyo*)			3 Signs (*tīni nimittāni*)		4 *Jhānas*	
One Perception (*ekā saññā*):								
Perception of repulsiveness in nutriment (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*)	Intelligent	P.	Ac.		P.	Le.	No	*jhāna*
One Definition (*ekāvavatthānā*)	"	"	"		"	"	"	"
Defining of the four elements (*catudhātuvavatthānā*)	"	"	"		"	"	"	"
Four Immaterial States (*cattāro āruppā*)	"	"	"		"	"	"	"
The base consisting of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*)	All	P.	Ac.	Ab.	"	"	Arūpajjhāna	
The base consisting of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	
The base consisting of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	
The base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*)	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	[1]

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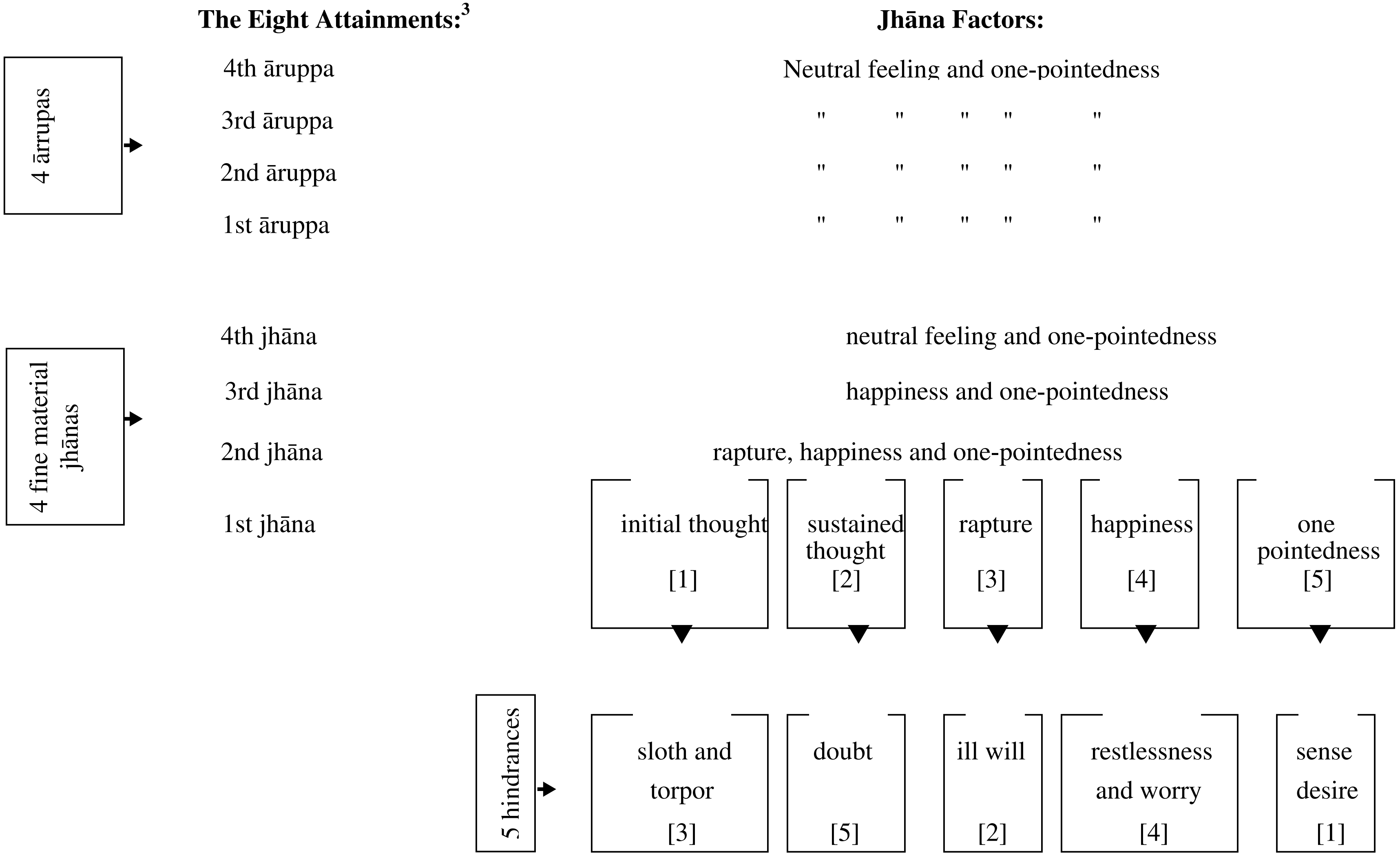
[1] Six temperaments: [1] lustful (*rāgacarita*); [2] hating (*dosacarita*), [3] deluded (*mohacarita*), [4] faithful (*saddhācarita*), [5] intelligent (*buddhicarita*), and [6] speculative (*vitakkacarita*). Three concentrations: [1] preliminary (*parikamma*), [2] access (*upacāra*), and [3] absorption (*appaṇā*). Three signs: [1] preliminary (*parikamma*), [2] learning (*uggaha*), and [3] counterpart (*paṭibhāga*). *P* = preliminary; *Ac* = access; *Ab* = absorption; *Le* = learning; *Cp* = counterpart sign.

Appendix 3



The Eight Attainments:[3]	Jhāna Factors:
4th āruppa	Neutral feeling and one-pointedness
3rd āruppa	" " " " "
2nd āruppa	" " " " "
1st āruppa	" " " " "
4th jhāna	neutral feeling and one-pointedness
3rd jhāna	happiness and one-pointedness
2nd jhāna	rapture, happiness and one-pointedness
1st jhāna	initial thought [1], sustained thought [2], rapture [3], happiness [4], one pointedness [5]

4 ārrupas
4 fine material jhānas
5 hindrances
initial thought [1]
sustained thought [2]
rapture [3]
happiness [4]
one pointedness [5]
sloth and torpor [3]
doubt [5]
ill will [2]
restlessness and worry [4]
sense desire [1]

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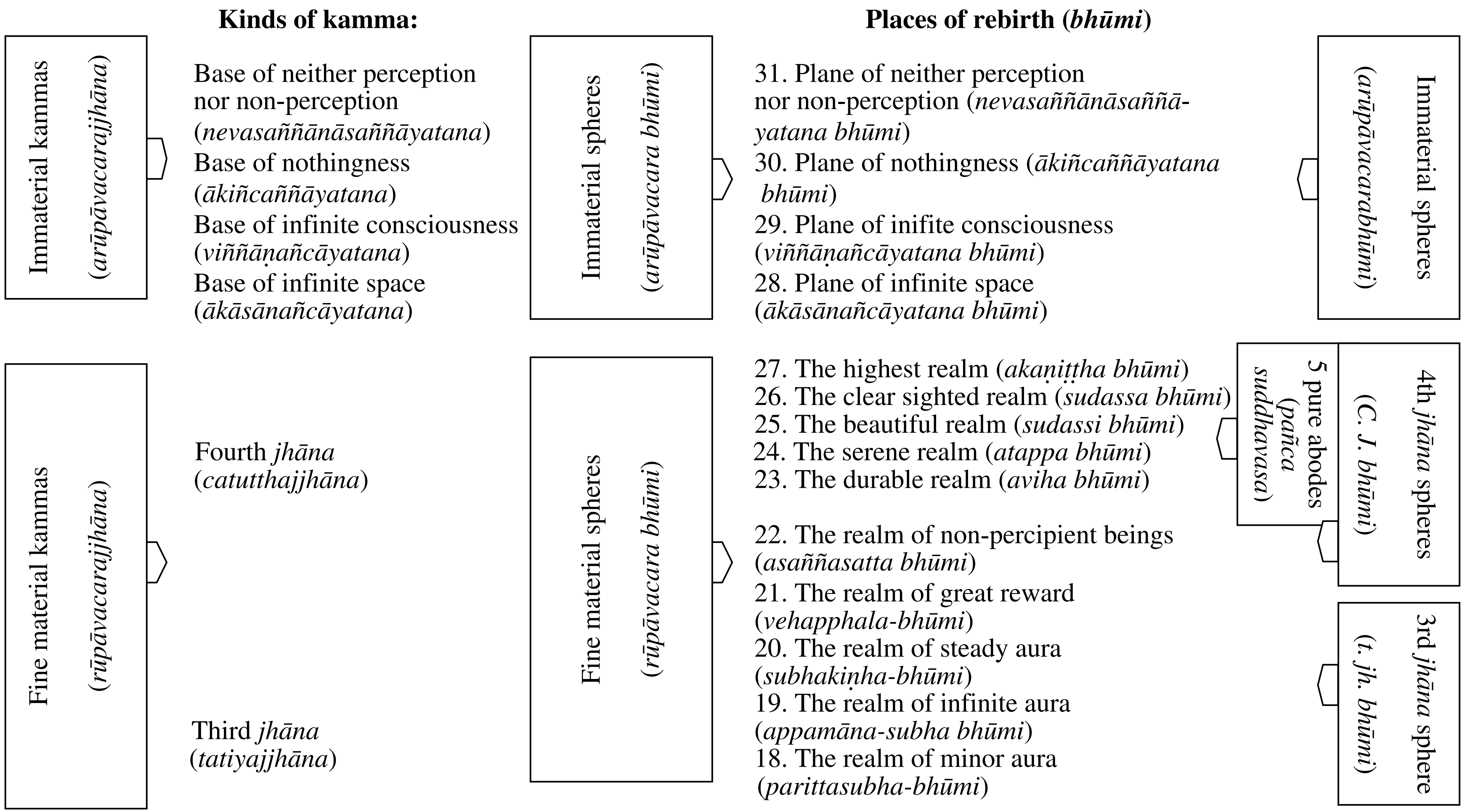
[3] Read from the bottom. *Jhāna* factors in Pali: *vitakha*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggatā* and *adukkhamasukhā vedanā*. Five hindrances: *kāmacchanda*, *byāpāda*, *thīnamiddha*, *uddhacca-kukkucca* and *vicikicchā*. Arrows indicate the hindrances suppressed by each factor of the first *jhāna*. Note that as the meditator reaches higher *jhānas* he eliminates lower *jhāna* factors. The factors of the fourth fine material *jhāna* are the same as those of the immaterial *jhānas.*

Appendix 4

Kamma and Rebirth[4]


Immaterial kammas
(*arūpāvacarajjhāna*)
Fine material kammas
(*rūpāvacarajjhāna*)
Immaterial spheres
(*arūpāvacara bhūmi*)
Fine material spheres
(*rūpāvacara bhūmi*)
Immaterial spheres
(*arūpāvacarabhūmi*)
5 pure abodes
(*pañca*
suddhavasa)
4th *jhāna* spheres
(*C. J. bhūmi*)
3rd *jhāna* sphere
(*t. jh. bhūmi*)

Kinds of kamma:

Base of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*)
Base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*)
Base of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*)
Base of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*)

Fourth *jhāna* (*catutthajjhāna*)

Third *jhāna* (*tatiyajjhāna*)

Places of rebirth (*bhūmi*)

31. Plane of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana bhūmi*)
30. Plane of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana bhūmi*)
29. Plane of inifite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana bhūmi*)
28. Plane of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana bhūmi*)

27. The highest realm (*akaṇiṭṭha bhūmi*)
26. The clear sighted realm (*sudassa bhūmi*)
25. The beautiful realm (*sudassi bhūmi*)
24. The serene realm (*atappa bhūmi*)
23. The durable realm (*aviha bhūmi*)

22. The realm of non-percipient beings (*asaññasatta bhūmi*)
21. The realm of great reward (*vehapphala-bhūmi*)
20. The realm of steady aura (*subhakiṇha-bhūmi*)
19. The realm of infinite aura (*appamāna-subha bhūmi*)
18. The realm of minor aura (*parittasubha-bhūmi*)

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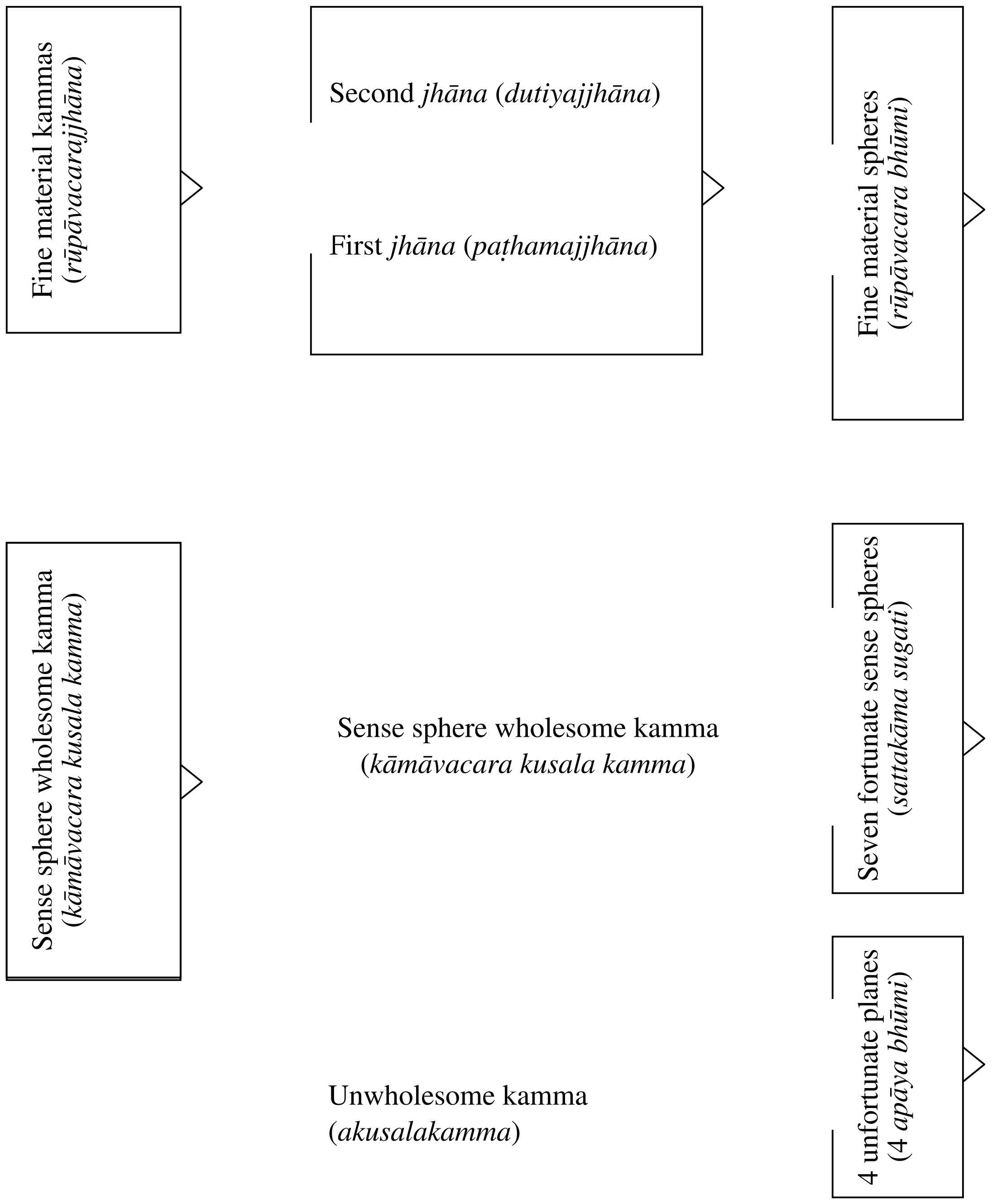
[4] Read from the bottom.



Kinds of kamma:[1]

Fine material kammas
(*rūpāvacarajjhāna*)

Second *jhāna* (*dutiyajjhāna*)

First *jhāna* (*paṭhamajjhāna*)

Sense sphere wholesome kamma
(*kāmāvacara kusala kamma*)

Sense sphere wholesome kamma
(*kāmāvacara kusala kamma*)

Unwholesome kamma
(*akusalakamma*)

Places of rebirth (*bhūmi*)

Fine material spheres
(*rūpāvacara bhūmi*)

17. The realm of radiant luster
(*ābhassara bhūmi*)
16. The realm of infinite luster
(*appamānābha bhūmi*)
15. The realm of minor luster
(*parittābha bhūmi*)

14. The realm of the great Brahmā
(*Mahābrahma bhūmi*)
13. The realm of the ministers of Brahmā
(*Brahmapurohita bhūmi*)
12. The realm of the retinue of Brahmā
(*Brahmapārisajja bhūmi*)

Seven fortunate sense spheres
(*sattakāma sugati*)

11. The realm of gods who lord over the creation of others
(*paranimmitavasavatti bhūmi*)
10. The realm of gods who rejoice in their own creation
(*nimmānarati bhūmi*)
9. The realm of delight
(*tusita bhūmi*)
8. The realm of Yama gods
(*Yāma bhūmi*)
7. The realm of thirty-three gods
(*tāvatiṃsa bhūmi*)
6. The realm of the four great kings
(*cātummahārājika bhūmi*)
5. Human realm (*manussaloka*)

4 unfortunate planes
(4 *apāya bhūmi*)

4. The host of titans (*asuranikāya*)
3. The hungry ghosts (*petaloka*)
2. The animal kingdom (*tiracchānayoni*)
1. Woeful states of existence (*nirayabhūmi*)[2]

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[1] Read from the bottom.

[2] Nārada, *Manual*, pp. 233-55, 259-62.

Glossary

Abhijjamāna	unbroken
Abhiññā	direct knowledge
Abyāpajja	free from trouble
Ādesanā	manifestation
Adhicitta	higher consciousness
Adhipaññā	higher wisdom
Adhisīla	higher morality
Ādīnava	danger, unsatisfactoriness
Adukkhamasukha	neither-pain-nor-pleasure
Āhāra	nutriment
Ajjhupekkhana	equanimity
Akallatā	indisposition
Akammaññatā	unwieldiness
Akaṇiṭṭha	the highest realm
Ākāraparivitakka	reflection on reason
Ākāravatī	rational
Ākāsānañcāyatana	the base of boundless space
Ākiñcaññāyatana	the base of nothingness
Akusala	unwholesome
Amanasikāra	non-attention
Anāgāmi	non-returner
Anāgataṃsañāṇa	knowledge of the future
Anaññātaññassāmitindriya	the faculty of ‘I shall know the unknown’
Ananta	unbounded
Ānāpānasati	mindfulness of breathing
Anattā	selfless, non-self
Aṅga	factor
Anicca	impermanent
Animitta	signless
Aññātavindriya	the faculty of the completion of final knowledge
Aññindriya	the faculty of final knowledge
Anubhavana	experiencing
Anuloma	conformity
Anupādisesanibbānadhātu	the nibbāna element without residue

Anupassanā	contemplation
Anupāyamanasikāra	inexpedient reflection, reflection on wrong track
Anupubbasaṅkhāranirodha	the gradual cessation of formation
Anusāsana	education or instruction
Anussati	recollection
Apacayagāmi	leading to demolition
Aparihāniya	invincible
Aparisesa	without remainder
Apāyabhūmi	the plane of misery
Apilāpanatā	not floating away
Appamānābha	the realm of infinite luster
Appamānasubha	the realm of infinite aura
Appanā	absorption
Appanihita	desireless
Arahat	a perfectly enlightened individual (untranslated)
Ārambhadhātu	element of effort
Ārammaṇa	object
Ariya	noble; a noble one
Āruppa	immaterial state
Arūpāvacarabhūmi	immaterial sphere
Asaṅkhata	unconditioned
Asaṅkheyya	incalculable
Asaññasatta	the realm of non-percipient beings
Asāraka	coreless
Āsava	canker
Āsavakkhayañāṇa	knowledge of the destruction of the cankers
Assāda	gratification
Asubha	foulness
Asurakāya	the host of titans
Atappa	the serene realm
Atītabhavaṅga	past moment of life continuum
Attanodhammatāya	by one’s own nature
Aṭṭhakathā	commentaries
Āvajjana	adverting
Aveccappasāda	confidence born of understanding
Āvībhāva	appearance

Aviha	the durable realm
Avijjā	ignorance
Bala	power
Bhaṅga	dissolution
Bhava	existence, becoming
Bhāvanā	development
Bhavaṅga	life continuum
Bhavaṅgupaccheda	cutting off or arrest of the passive consciousness
Bhaya	fear, fearful, terror
Bhūmi	plane, realm
Bojjhaṅga	enlightenment factor
Brahmapārisajja	retinue of Brahma
Brahmavihāra	divine abiding
Byāpāda	ill will
Candimā	moon
Caraṇa	conduct
Carita	temperament
Cātummahārājika	the realm of the four great kings
Cetasika	mental factor
Cetopariyañāṇa	the knowledge of others’ mind
Cetovimutti	liberation of mind
Chanda	zeal
Citta	mind, consciousness
Cittavīthi	active process of consciousness
Cutūpapātañāṇa	the knowledge of passing away and rebirth of beings
Dassana	vision
Dhamma	[1] doctrine, truth; [2] mental object, phenomena
Dhammacchando	desire for dhamma
Dhammānusāri	truth-devotee
Dhātumanasikāra	reflection on the modes of materiality
Dibbacakkhu	the divine eye
Dibbasotadhātu	the divine ear-element
Dibbavihāra	heavenly dwelling
Diṭṭhadhammanibbāna	nibbāna here and now
Diṭṭhi.	views, wrong views
Diṭṭhippatta	attained to understanding

Domanassa	grief
Dosa	hatred
Ekaggatā	one-pointedness (of mind)
Ekodibhāva	unification (of mind)
Gantha	bodily ties
Garuka	weighty
Gotrabhū	change-of-lineage
Hadayarūpa	the matter of the heart
Iddhi	wonder or marvel
Iddhividhañāṇa	knowledge of the modes of supernormal powers
Indriya	faculty
Indriyasammattapaṭipādana	balancing the spiritual faculties
Indriyasaṃvara	the restraint of the senses
Jhāna	states of absorption in meditation [untranslated]
Jhānaṅga	jhana factor
Jhānakkantika	skipping alternate jhanas
Jhāyati	thinks
Kalāpasammasana	comprehension by groups
Kalyāṇamitta	good friend
Kāma	sense pleasure; sensual desire
Kāmacchanda	sensual desire
Kāmapariḷāha	the fever of sensuality
Kāmapariyesanā	the search for sensual gratification
Kamati	travels
Kāmāvacara	sense sphere
Kamma	volitional action [untranslated]
Kāmūpādāna	clinging to sense pleasure
Kasiṇa	a device used as an object of concentration [untranslated]
Kasiṇukkantika	skipping alternate kasina
Kattukamyatā	desire to accomplish some aim
Kāya	body
Kāyasakkhi	body-witness
Kāyaviveka	bodily seclusion
Khandha	aggregates
Khaṇika	momentary
Khaya	destruction

Khuddika	minor
Kilesa	defilement
Kukkucca	worry
Kusala	wholesome
Kusalacittassekaggatā	wholesome one-pointedness of mind
Lakkhaṇa	characteristics
Lakkhaṇūpanijjhāna	the contemplation of the characteristics of phenomena
Lobha	greed
Lokiya	mundane
Lokuttara	supramundane
Magga	path
Mahāpurisavitakka	thoughts of a great man
Māna	conceit
Manodvāra	mind door
Manomayiddhiñāṇa	knowledge of the mind-created body
Manussaloka	the human world
Micchāsamādhi	wrong concentration
Middha	torpor
Moha	delusion
Nāma	mentality
Nāmarūpa	mentality-materiality
Ñāṇa	knowledge
Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana	the base of neither perception nor non-perception
Nibbāna	[untranslated]
Nibbidā	dispassion
Niggaha	restraining
Nikkamadhātu	element of exertion
Nimittavaḍḍhana	extension of sign
Nimmāṇarati	rejoicing in one’s own creation
Nirāmisasukha	spiritual happiness
Niraya	woeful state
Nirodha	cessation
Nirujjhati	ceases
Nīvaraṇa	hindrance
Niyyānika	emancipating
Ogha	floods

Okkantika	showering
Orambhāgiva	pertaining to the lower worlds
Paccattaṃ	within oneself (within themselves)
Paccavekkhaṇa	reviewing
Paccayaṭṭhāna	objective station
Paccekabuddha	individual or silent Buddha [untranslated]
Paccupaṭṭhāna	manifestation
Pāda	basis
Pādakajjhāna	basic jhana
Paggaha	exerting the mind
Pahāna	abandonment
Pahānaṅga	factors of abandonment
Pajānana	the act of understanding
Pakkhapātita	partiality
Pakkhi	bird
Palibodha	impediment
Pallaṅka	sitting cross-legged
Pāmojja	gladness
Pañca	five
Pāṇi	hand
Paññā	wisdom
Paññatti	a conceptual entity
Paññāvimutta	liberated by wisdom
Paññāvimutti	liberation by wisdom
Papañca	impediments
Parakkamadhātu	element of striving
Paranimmitavasavatti	the realm of gods who lord over the creations of others
Pariggaha	discerning
Parikammanimitta	preliminary sign
Parikammasamādhi	preliminary concentration
Parikkhāra	requisites
Parimajjati	strokes
Parimasati	touches
Parinibbāna	final nibbāna
Pariññā	full understanding

Parittābha	the realm of minor luster
Parittasubha	the realm of minor aura
Parivitakka	reflection
Pariyāyena	figuratively
Passaddhi	tranquility
Paṭibhāganimitta	counterpart sign
Paṭigha	aversion
Piṭihāriya	wonder
Paṭiloma	reverse order
Paṭisaṃvedeti	experiences
Pavivekasukha	happiness born of seclusion from sense pleasures and the hindrances
Pettivisaya	the sphere of tormented spirits or “hungry ghosts”
Phala	fruit, fruition
Pharaṇa	pervading
Phassa	contact
Pīti	rapture
Pubbaṅgama	forerunner
Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa	the knowledge of recollecting previous lives
Puggala	individual
Puggalajjhāsaya	inclination of individuals
Purecārika	precursor
Puthujjana	the ordinary man
Rāga	lust
Rasa	function
Rūpa	material form
Rūpāvacara	fine material sphere
Sabbacittasādhāraṇa	universal concomitant of consciousness
Sabhāva	the true nature
Sacchikiriya	realization
Saddhā	faith
Saddhānusārī	faith-devotee
Saddhāpadānāni	foundations of faith
Saddhāvimutta	liberated by faith
Sakadāgāmi	Once-returner
Sakkāyadiṭṭhi	personality-view
Sakuṇa	bird

Samādhi	concentration
Samādhikkhandha	group of concentration
Samannāgataṅgāni	factors of possession
Samantapāsādikā	completely inspiring
Samāpatti	attainment
Samatha	serenity
Samathayānika	one who makes serenity his vehicle
Samatikkama	having surmounted
Saṃkappa	intention
Sammā	right
Sammasana	comprehension
Sammasitajjhāna	comprehended jhana
Sampahaṅsana	encouraging
Sampajañña	discernment
Sampasādana	confidence
Saṃsāra	the round of repeated becoming
Samucchedappahāna	abandonment by eradication
Saṃvara	restraint
Saṃvatteti	exercises
Saṃyojana	fetter
Sandiṭṭhikanibbāna	immediately visible nibbāna
Sañjānana	the mode of perceiving
Saṅkantika	transposition
Saṅkappa	intention
Saṃkhāra	[1] formation, [2] mental formation, [3] volitional formation
Saññā	perception
Santuṭṭhi	contentment
Sati	mindfulness
Satipaṭṭhāna	foundation of mindfulness
Sayambhūñāṇa	self-evolved wisdom
Setughāta	breaking the bridge
Sikkhā	training
Sīla	morality
Sīlabbataparāmāsa	clinging to rites and rituals
Sobhana	beautiful

Somanassa	joy
Sotāpanna	stream-enterer
Sotāpatti	stream-entry
Subhakiṇha	the realm of steady aura
Suddhāvāsa	the pure abode
Sugatibhūmi	plane of happiness
Sukha	happiness, pleasure, pleasant
Sukkhavipassaka	dry insight worker
Suññātā	voidness
Suriya	sun
Tadaṅganibbāna	factor of nibbāna
Takkavīthi	reasoning
Tatramajjhattatā	specific neutrality
Tāvatiṃsa	the realm of the thirty-three gods
Tevijja	triple knowledge
Thīna	sloth
Ṭhīti	presence
Ṭīkā	subcommentary
Tiracchānayoni	animal kingdom
Tirobhāva	disappearance
Tirokuḍḍaṃ	through walls
Tiro-pabbataṃ	through mountains
Tiro-pākāraṃ	through enclosures
Tisso sikkhā	three trainings
Tunhībhāva	silence
Ubbega	uplifting
Ubhatobhāgavimutta	liberated in both ways
Udaka	water
Udayabbaya	rise and fall
Uddhacca	restlessness
Uddhambhāgiya	pertaining to the higher worlds
Uggahanimitta	learning sign
Ummujja-nimujjaṃ	dive in and out
Upacāra	access
Upacārasamādhi	access concentration
Upādāna	clinging

Upadhiviveka	seclusion from the substance
Upakkilesa	impediment, corruption
Upanijjhāna	contemplation
Upekkhā	equanimity
Uppāda	arising
Uttarati	rises up
Vacīsaṅkhāra	activity of speech
Vasitā	mastery
Vatthukāma	objective sense pleasure
Vavassagga	renunciation
Vavatthāpana	definition
Vedanā	feeling
Vedayita	being felt
Veditabba	to be realized
Vicāra	sustained thought
Vicaya	investigation
Vicikicchā	doubt
Vihiṃsā vitakka	thought of harming
Vijānana	mode of cognizing
Vijjā	knowledge
Vijjācaraṇasampanna	endowed with knowledge and conduct
Vikkhambhanaviveka	seclusion by suppression
Vikkhambanappahāna	abandoning by way of suppression
Vikubbana	transformation
Vīmaṃsa	inquiry
Vimokkha (Vimokha)	liberation
Vimokkhamukha	gateway to liberation
Vimutti	emancipation
Vimuttirasa	taste of freedom
Vinipāta	the downfall
Vinīvaraṇacitta	the mind devoid of the hindrances
Viññāṇa	consciousness
Viññāṇañcāyatana	base of boundless consciousness
Villu	the wise
Vipāka	result
Vipassanā	insight

Vipassanāyānika	one who makes (bare) insight his vehicle
Viriya	energy
Visuddhi	purification
Vitakka	applied thought
Viveka	seclusion
Vuṭṭhāna	emergence
Yāna	vehicle
Yathākammūpagañāṇa	knowledge of faring according to kamma
Yoga	bonds
Yogin	meditator
Yonisomanasikāra	wise consideration

List of Abbreviations used

AN.	The Aṅguttara Nikāya
AN.A.	The Aṅguttara Nikāya Aṭṭhakatha (Manorathapūraṇi)
AN.T.	The Aṅguttara Nikāya Ṭīkā (Sāratthamañjūsā)
BD.	The Book of the Discipline
BMTP.	Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice
Dhp.	The Dhammapada
Dhs.	The Dhammasaṅgani
Dhs.A.	The Dhammasaṅgani Aṭṭhakathā (Aṭṭhasālinī)
DN.	The Dīgha Nikāya
DN.A.	The Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Sumaṅgala Vilāsini)
DN.T.	The Dīgha Nikāya Ṭīkā
Dial.	Dialogues of the Buddha
GS.	The Book of the Gradual Saying
KS.	The Book of the Kindred Sayings
Milp.	The Milindapañha
MLS.	The Middle Length Sayings
MN.	The Majjhima Nikāya
MN.A.	The Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Papañcasūdani)
MN.T.	The Majjhima Nikāya Ṭīkā
PI.	Progress of Insight
PP.	Path of Purification
Psy. Ethics.	Buddhist Psychological Ethics
Pts.	The Paṭisambhidāmagga
Pts.A.	The Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā (Saddhammappakāsinī)
Pug.P.	The Dhātukathā Puggalapaññattipāli
QKM.	The Questions of King Milinda
SN.	The Saṃyutta Nikāya
SN.A.	The Saṃyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Sāratthapakāsanī)
SN.T.	The Saṃyutta Nikāya Ṭīkā
Vibh.	The Vibhaṅga
Vimv.T.	The Vimativinodani Ṭīkā (Samantapāsādikāṭīkā)
Vinp.	The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ
Vin.A.	The Vinayaṭṭhakathā (Samantapāsādikā)
Vism.	The Visuddhimagga
Vism.T.	The Visuddhimagga Mahā Ṭīkā (Paramatthamañjūsā).

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The
Power
of
Mindfulness

An Inquiry into the
Scope of Bare Attention
and the
Principal Sources of its
Strength

Nyanaponika Thera

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Four Sources of Power in Bare Attention

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INTRODUCTION

Is mindfulness actually a power in its own right as claimed by the title of this essay? Seen from the viewpoint of the ordinary pursuits of life, it does not seem so. From that angle mindfulness, or attention, has a rather modest place among many other seemingly more important mental faculties serving the purpose of variegated wish-fulfilment. Here, mindfulness means just "to watch one's steps" so that one may not stumble or miss a chance in the pursuit of one's aims. Only in the case of specific tasks and skills is mindfulness sometimes cultivated more deliberately, but here too it is still regarded as a subservient function, and its wider scope and possibilities are not recognized.

Even if one turns to the Buddha's doctrine, taking only a surface view of the various classifications and lists of mental factors in which mindfulness appears, one may be inclined to regard this faculty just as "one among many." Again one may get the impression that it has a rather subordinate place and is easily surpassed in significance by other faculties.

Mindfulness in fact has, if we may personify it, a rather unassuming character. Compared with it, mental factors such as devotion, energy, imagination, and intelligence, are certainly more colourful personalities, making an immediate and strong impact on people and situations. Their conquests are sometimes rapid and vast, though often insecure. Mindfulness, on the other hand, is of an unobtrusive nature. Its virtues shine inwardly, and in ordinary life most of its merits are passed on to other mental faculties which generally receive all the credit. One must know mindfulness well and cultivate its acquaintance before one can appreciate its value and its silent penetrative influence. Mindfulness walks slowly and deliberately, and its daily task is of a rather humdrum nature. Yet where it places its feet it cannot easily be dislodged, and it acquires and bestows true mastery of the ground it covers.

Mental faculties of such a nature, like actual personalities of a similar type, are often overlooked or underrated. In the case of mindfulness, it required a genius like the Buddha to discover the "hidden talent" in the modest garb, and to develop the vast inherent power of that potent seed. It is, indeed, the mark of a genius to perceive and to harness the power of the seemingly small. Here, truly, it happens that, what is little becomes much." A revaluation of values takes place. The standards of greatness and smallness change. Through the master mind of the Buddha, mindfulness is finally revealed as the point where the vast revolving mass of world suffering is levered out of its twofold anchorage in ignorance and craving.

The Buddha spoke of the power of mindfulness in a very emphatic way:

> *Mindfulness, I declare, is all-helpful.*
>
> SAMYUTTA, 46:59

All things can be mastered by mindfulness.

Anguttara, 8:83

Further, there is that solemn and weighty utterance opening and concluding the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness:

> *This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of pain and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the four foundations of mindfulness.*

In ordinary life, if mindfulness, or attention, is directed to any object, it is rarely sustained long enough for the purpose of careful and factual observation. Generally it is followed immediately by emotional reaction, discriminative thought, reflection, or purposeful action. In a life and thought governed by the Buddha's teaching too, mindfulness (*sati*) is mostly linked with clear comprehension *(sampajañña)* of the right purpose or suitability of an action, and other considerations. Thus again it is not viewed in itself. But to tap the actual and potential *power* of mindfulness it is necessary to understand and deliberately cultivate it in its basic, unalloyed form, which we shall call *bare attention.*

By bare attention we understand the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception. It is called "bare" because it attends to the bare facts of a perception without reacting to them by deed, speech or mental comment. Ordinarily, that Purely receptive state of mind is, as we said, just a very brief phase of the thought process of which one is often scarcely aware. But in the methodical development of mindfulness aimed at the unfolding of its latent powers, bare attention is sustained for as long a time as one's strength of concentration permits. Bare attention then becomes the key to the meditative practice of Satipaṭṭhāna, opening the door to mind's mastery and final liberation.

Bare attention is developed in two ways: (1) as a methodical meditative practice with selected objects; (2) as applied, as far as practicable, to the normal events of the day, together with a general attitude of mindfulness and clear comprehension. The details of the practice have been described elsewhere, and need not be repeated here.*

The primary purpose of this essay is to demonstrate and explain the efficacy of this method, that is, to show the actual power of mindfulness. Particularly in an age like ours, with its superstitious worship of ceaseless external activity, there will be those who ask: "How can such a passive attitude of mind as that of bare attention possibly lead to the great results claimed for it?" In reply, one may be inclined to suggest to the questioner not to rely on the words of others, but to put these assertions of the Buddha to the test of personal experience. But those who do not yet know the Buddha's teaching well enough to accept it as a reliable guide, may hesitate to take up, without good reasons, a practice that just on account of its radical simplicity may appear strange to them. In the following, a number of such “good reasons” are therefore proffered for the reader’s scrutiny. They are also meant as an introduction to the general spirit of Satipaṭṭhāna and as pointers to its wide and significant perspectives. Furthermore, it is hoped that he who has taken up the methodical training will recognize in the following observations certain features of his own practice, and be encouraged to cultivate them deliberately.

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* See Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London: Rider & Co., 1962).

* * *

FOUR SOURCES OF POWER IN BARE ATTENTION

We shall now deal with four aspects of bare attention, which are the mainsprings of the power of mindfulness. They are not the only sources of its strength, but they are the principal ones to which the efficacy of this method of mental development is due. These four are:

1. the functions of "tidying-up" and "naming" exercised by bare attention;
2. its non-violent, non-coercive procedure;
3. the capacity of stopping and slowing down;
4. the directness of vision bestowed by bare attention.

1. THE FUNCTIONS OF "TIDYING" AND "NAMING"

Tidying Up the Mental Household

If anyone whose mind is not harmonized and controlled through methodical meditative training should take a close look at his own everyday thoughts and activities, he will meet with a rather disconcerting sight. Apart from the few main channels of his purposeful thoughts and activities, he will everywhere be faced with a tangled mass of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and casual bodily movements showing a disorderliness and confusion which he would certainly not tolerate in his living-room. Yet this is the state of affairs that we take for granted within a considerable portion of our waking life and our normal mental activity. Let us now look at the details of that rather untidy picture.

First we meet a vast number of casual sense-impressions such as sights and sounds, passing constantly through our mind.

Most of them remain vague and fragmentary; some are even based on faulty perceptions and misjudgements. Carrying these inherent weaknesses, they often form the untested basis for judgements and decisions on a higher level of consciousness. True, all these casual sense impressions need not and cannot be objects of focused attention. A stone on the road that happens to meet our glance will have a claim on our attention only if it obstructs our progress or is of interest to us for some reason. Yet if we neglect these casual impressions too often, we may stumble over many stones lying on our road and also overlook many gems.

Besides the casual sense impressions, there are those more significant and definite perceptions, thoughts, feelings and volitions which have a closer connection with our purposeful life. Here too, we find that a very high proportion of them are in a state of utter confusion. Hundreds of cross-currents flash through the mind, and everywhere there are “bits and ends” of unfinished thoughts, stifled emotions and passing moods. Many meet a premature death. Owing to their innately feeble nature, our lack of concentration or suppression by new and stronger impressions, they do not persist and develop. If we observe our own mind, we shall notice how easily diverted our thoughts are, how often they behave like undisciplined disputants constantly interrupting each other and refusing to listen to the other side's arguments. Again, many lines of thought remain rudimentary or are left untranslated into will and action, because courage is lacking to accept their practical, moral or intellectual consequences. If we continue to examine more closely our average perceptions, thoughts or judgements, we shall have to admit that many of them are unreliable. They are just the products of habit, led by prejudices of intellect or emotion, by our pet preferences or aversions, by laziness or selfishness, by faulty or superficial observations.

Such a look into long-neglected quarters of the mind will come as a wholesome shock to the observer. It will convince him of the urgent need for methodical mental culture extending below the thin surface layer of the mind to those vast twilight regions of consciousness we have just visited. The observer will then become aware that the relatively small sector of the mind that stands in the intense light of purposeful will and thought is not a reliable standard of the inner strength and lucidity of consciousness in its totality. He will also see that the quality of individual consciousness cannot be judged by a few optimal results of mental activity achieved in brief, intermittent periods. The decisive factor in determining the quality of consciousness is self-understanding and self-control: whether that dim awareness characteristic of our everyday mind and the uncontrolled portion of everyday activity tends to increase or decrease.

It is the daily little negligence in thoughts, words and deeds going on for many years of our life (and as the Buddha teaches, for many existences), that is chiefly responsible for the untidiness and confusion we find in our minds. This negligence creates the trouble and allows it to continue. Thus the old Buddhist teachers have said: “Negligence produces a lot of dirt. As in a house, so in the mind, only a very little dirt collects in a day or two, but if it goes on for many years, it will grow into a vast heap of refuse.”*

The dark, untidy corners of the mind are the hideouts of our most dangerous enemies. From there they attack us unawares, and much too often succeed in defeating us. That twilight world peopled by frustrated desires and suppressed resentments, by vacillations, whims and many other shadowy figures, forms a background from which upsurging passions – greed and lust, hatred and anger – may derive powerful, support. Besides, the obscure and obscuring nature of that twilight region is the very element and mother-soil of the third and strongest of the three roots of evil (*akusala mula*), ignorance or delusion.

Attempts at eliminating the mind’s main defilements – greed, hate and delusion – must fail as long as these defilements find refuge and support in the uncontrolled dim regions of the mind; as long as the close and complex tissue of those half-articulate thoughts and emotions forms the basic texture of mind into which just a few golden strands of noble and lucid thought are woven. But how are we to deal with that unwieldy, tangled mass? Usually we try to ignore it and to rely on the counteracting energies of our surface mind. But the only safe remedy is to face it – with mindfulness. Nothing more difficult is needed than to acquire the habit of directing bare attention to these rudimentary thoughts as often as possible. The working principle here is the simple fact that two thoughts cannot coexist at the same time: if the clear light of mindfulness is present, there is no room for mental twilight. When sustained mindfulness has secured a firm foothold, it will be a matter of comparatively secondary importance how the mind will then deal with those rudimentary thoughts, moods and emotions. One may just dismiss them and replace them by purposeful thoughts; or one may allow and even compel them to complete what they have to say. In the latter case they will often reveal how poor and weak they actually are, and it will then not be difficult to dispose of them once they are forced into the open. This procedure of bare attention is very simple and effective; the difficulty is only the persistence in applying it.

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* Anagarika B. Govinda, *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy* (London: Rider & Co., 1961).

Observing a complex thing means identifying its component parts, singling out the separate strands forming that intricate tissue. If this is applied to the complex currents of mental and practical life, automatically a strong regulating influence will be noticeable. As if ashamed in the presence of the calmly observing eye, the course of thoughts will proceed in a less disorderly and wayward manner; it will not be so easily diverted, and will resemble more and more a well-regulated river.

During decades of the present life and throughout millennia of previous lives traversing the round of existence, there has steadily grown, within each individual, a closely knit system of intellectual and emotional prejudices, of bodily and mental habits that are no longer questioned as to their rightful position and useful function in human life. Here again, the application of bare attention loosens the hard soil of these often very ancient layers of the human mind, preparing thus the ground for sowing the seed of methodical mental training. Bare attention identifies and pursues the single threads of that closely interwoven tissue of our habits. It sorts out carefully the subsequent justifications of passionate impulses and the pretended motives of our prejudices. Fearlessly it questions old habits often grown meaningless. It uncovers their roots, and thus helps abolish all that is seen to be harmful. In brief, bare attention lays open the minute crevices in the seemingly impenetrable structure of unquestioned mental processes. Then the sword of wisdom wielded by the strong arm of constant meditative practice will be able to penetrate these crevices, and finally to break up that structure where required. If the inner connections between the single parts of a seemingly compact whole become intelligible, they then cease to be inaccessible.

When the facts and details of the mind's conditioned nature are uncovered by meditative practice, there is an increased chance to effect fundamental changes in the mind. In that way, not only those hitherto unquestioned habits of the mind, its twilight regions and its normal processes as well, but even those seemingly solid, indisputable facts of the world of matter – all will become "questionable" and lose much of their self-assurance.

Many people are so impressed and intimidated by that bland self-assurance of assumed "solid facts," that they hesitate to take up any spiritual training, doubting that it can effect anything worthwhile. The application of bare attention to the task of tidying and regulating the mind will bring perceptible results – results which will dispel their doubts and encourage them to enter more fully a spiritual path.

The tidying or regulating function of bare attention, we should note, is of fundamental importance for that "purification of beings" mentioned by the Buddha as the first aim of Satipaṭṭhāna. This phrase refers, of course, to the purification of their minds, and here the very first step is to bring initial order into the functioning of the mental processes. We have seen how this is done by bare attention. In that sense, the commentary to the "Discourse on the Foundation of Mindfulness" explains the words "for the purification of beings" as follows:

"It is said: 'Mental taints defile beings; mental clarity purifies them.' That mental clarity comes to be by this way of mindfulness *(satipaṭṭhāna magga).*"

Naming

We said before that bare attention "tidies up" or regulates the mind by sorting out and identifying the various confused strands of the mental process. That identifying function, like any other mental activity, is connected with a verbal formulation. In other words, "identifying" proceeds by way of expressly "naming" the respective mental processes.

Primitive man believed that words could exercise a magical power: "Things that could be named had lost their secret power over man, the horror of the unknown. To know the name of a force, a being or an object was (to primitive man) identical with the mastery over it."* That ancient belief in the magical potency of names appears also in many fairy tales and myths, where the power of a demon is broken just by facing him courageously and pronouncing his name.

There is an element of truth in the "word-magic" of primitive man, and in the practice of bare attention we will find the power of naming confirmed. The "twilight demons" of the mind – our passionate impulses and obscure thoughts – cannot bear the simple but clarifying question about their "names," much less the knowledge of these names. Hence this is often alone sufficient to diminish their strength. The calmly observant glance of mindfulness discovers the demons in their hiding places. The practice of calling them by their names drives them out into the open, into the daylight of consciousness. There they will feel embarrassed and obliged to justify themselves, although at this stage of bare attention they have not yet even been subjected to any closer questioning except about their names, their identity. If forced into the open while still in an incipient stage, they will be incapable of withstanding scrutiny and will just dwindle away. Thus a first victory over them may be won, even at an early stage of the practice.

The appearance in the mind of undesirable and ignoble thoughts, even if they are very fleeting and only half-articulate, has an unpleasant effect upon one's self-esteem. Therefore such thoughts are often shoved aside, unattended to and unopposed. Often they are also camouflaged by more pleasing and respectable labels which hide their true nature. Thoughts disposed of in either of these two ways will strengthen the accumulated power of ignoble tendencies in the subconscious. Furthermore, these procedures will weaken one's will to resist the arising and the dominance of mental defilements, and strengthen the tendency to evade the issues. But by applying the simple method of clearly and honestly naming or registering any undesirable thoughts, these two harmful devices, ignorance and camouflage, are excluded. Thence their detrimental consequences on the structure of the subconscious and their diversion of mental effort will be avoided.

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* Comy. to Sutta Nipata v. 334.

When ignoble thoughts or personal shortcomings are called by their right names, the mind will develop an inner resistance and even repugnance against them. In time it may well succeed in keeping them in check and finally eliminating them. Even if these means do not bring undesirable tendencies fully under control at once, they will stamp upon them the impact of repeated resistance which will weaken them whenever they reappear. To continue our personification, we may say that unwholesome thoughts will no longer be the unopposed masters of the scene, and this diffidence of theirs will make them considerably easier to deal with. It is the power of moral shame *(hiri-bala)* that has been mustered here as an ally, methodically strengthened by these simple yet subtle psychological techniques.

The method of naming and registering also extends, of course, to noble thoughts and impulses which will be encouraged and strengthened. Without being given deliberate attention, such wholesome tendencies often pass unnoticed and remain barren. But when clear awareness is applied to them, it will stimulate their growth.

It is one of the most beneficial features of right mindfulness, and particularly of bare attention, that it enables us to utilize all external events and inner mental events for our progress. Even the unsalutary can be made a starting point for the salutary if, through the device of naming or registering, it becomes an object of detached knowledge.

In several passages of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta the function of naming or "bare registering" seems to be indicated by formulating the respective statements by way of direct speech. There are no less than four such instances in the discourse:

1. "When experiencing a pleasant feeling, he knows 'I experience a pleasant feeling'," etc.;
2. "He knows of a lustful (state of) mind, 'Mind is lustful'," etc.;
3. "If (the hindrance of) sense desire is present in him, he knows, 'Sense desire is present in me'," etc.;
4. "If the enlightenment factor mindfulness is present in him, he knows, 'The enlightenment factor mindfulness is present in me'," etc.

In concluding this section, we briefly point out that the *tidying-up and naming* of mental processes is the indispensable preparation for fully understanding them in their true nature, the task of insight *(vipassana)*. These functions, exercised by bare attention, will help dispel the illusion that the mental processes are compact. They will also help us to discern their specific nature or characteristics, and to notice their momentary rise and fall.

❧

2. THE NON-COERCIVE PROCEDURE

Obstacles to Meditation

Both the world surrounding us and the world of our own minds are full of hostile and conflicting forces causing us pain and frustration. We know from our Own bitter experience that we are not strong enough to meet and conquer all these antagonistic forces in open combat. In the external world we cannot have everything exactly as we want it, while in the inner world of the mind, our passions, impulses, and whims often override the demands of duty, reason and our higher aspirations.

We further learn that often an undesirable situation will only worsen if excessive pressure is used against it. Passionate desires may grow in intensity if one tries to silence them by sheer force of will. Disputes and quarrels will go on endlessly and grow fiercer if they are fanned again and again by angry retorts or by vain attempts to crush the other man's position. A disturbance during work, rest or meditation will be felt more strongly and will have a longer-lasting impact if one reacts to it by resentment and anger and attempts to suppress it.

'Thus, again and again, we meet with situations in life where we cannot *force* issues. But there are ways of mastering the vicissitudes of life and conflicts of mind without application of force. Non-violent means may often succeed where attempts at coercion, internal or external, fail. Such a non-violent way of mastering life and mind is Satipaṭṭhāna. By the methodical application of bare attention, the basic practice in the development of right mindfulness, all the latent powers of a non-coercive approach will gradually unfold, with their beneficial results and their wide and unexpected implications.

In this context we are mainly concerned with the benefits of Satipaṭṭhāna for the mastery of mind, and for the progress in meditation that may result from a non-coercive procedure. But we shall also cast occasional side glances at its repercussions on everyday life. It will not be difficult for a thoughtful reader to make more detailed application to his own problems.

The antagonistic forces that appear in meditation and that are liable to upset its smooth course are of three kinds:

1 external disturbances, such as noise;

2 mental defilements *(kilesa),* such as lust, anger, restlessness, dissatisfaction, or sloth, which may arise at any time during meditation; and

3 various incidental stray thoughts, or surrender to day-dreaming.

These distractions are the great stumbling blocks for a beginner in meditation who has not yet acquired sufficient dexterity to deal with them effectively. To give thought to those disturbing factors only when they actually arise at the time of meditation is insufficient. If caught unprepared in one's defence, one will struggle with them in a more or less haphazard and ineffective way, and with a feeling of irritation which will itself be an additional impediment. If disturbances of any kind and unskilful reactions to them occur several times during one session, one may come to feel utterly frustrated and irritated and give up further attempts to meditate, at least for the present occasion.

In fact, even meditators who are quite well informed by books or a teacher about all the details concerning their subject of meditation often lack instruction on how to deal skilfully with the disturbances they may meet. The feeling of helplessness in facing them is the most formidable difficulty for a beginning meditator. At that point many accept defeat, abandoning prematurely any further effort at methodical practice. As in worldly affairs, so in meditation, one's way of dealing with the "initial difficulties" will often be decisive for success or failure.

When faced by inner and outer disturbances, the inexperienced or uninstructed beginner will generally react in two ways. He will first try to shove them away lightly, and if he fails in that, he will try to suppress them by sheer force of will. But these disturbances are like insolent flies: by whisking – first lightly and then with increasing vigour and anger – one may perhaps succeed in driving them away for a while, but usually they will return with an exasperating constancy, and the effort and vexation of whisking will have produced only an additional disturbance of one's composure.

Satipaṭṭhāna, through its method of bare attention, offers a non-violent alternative to those futile and even harmful attempts at suppression by force. A successful non-violent procedure in mind-control has to start with the right attitude. There must be first the full cognizance and sober acceptance of the fact that those three disturbing factors are co-inhabitants of the world we live in, whether we like it or not. Our disapproval of them will not alter the fact. With some we shall have to come to terms, and concerning the others – the mental defilements, we shall have to learn how to deal with them effectively until they are finally conquered.

1. Since we are not the sole inhabitants of this densely populated world, there are bound to be *external disturbances of* various kinds, such as noise and interruptions by visitors. We cannot always live in "splendid isolation," "from noise of men and dogs untroubled," or in "ivory towers" high above the crowd. Right meditation is not escapism; it is not meant to provide hiding-places for temporary oblivion. Realistic meditation has the purpose of training the mind to face, to understand and to conquer this very world in which we live. And this world inevitably includes numerous obstacles to the life of meditation.

2. The Burmese meditation master, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw said: "In an unliberated worldling *mental defilements* are sure to arise again and again. He has to face that fact and know these defilements well in order to apply again and again the appropriate remedy of satipaṭṭhāna. Then they will grow weaker, more short-lived, and will finally disappear." To know the occurrence and nature of defilements is therefore as important for a meditator as to know the occurrence of his noble thoughts.

By facing one's own defilements one will be stirred to increase the effort to eliminate them. On the other hand, if out of a false shame or pride one tries to avert one's glance when they arise, one will never truly join issue with them, and will always evade the final and decisive encounter. By hitting blindly at them, one will only exhaust or even hurt oneself. But by observing carefully their nature and behaviour when they arise in one's own mind, one will be able to meet them well prepared, to forestall them often, and finally to banish them fully. Therefore meet your defilements with a free and open glance! Be not ashamed, afraid or discouraged!

3. The third group of intruders disturbing the meditator's mind are *stray thoughts* and *daydreams*. These may consist of various memories and images of the past, recent or remote, including those emerging from sub–conscious depths; thoughts of the future – planning, imagining, fearing, hoping; and the casual sense-perceptions that may occur at the very time of meditation, often dragging after them a long trail of associated ideas. Whenever concentration and mindfulness slacken, stray thoughts or daydreams appear and fill the vacuum. Though they seem insignificant in themselves, through their frequent occurrence they form a most formidable obstacle, not only for the beginner, but in all cases when the mind is restless or distracted. However, when these invaders can be kept at bay, even long continuous periods of meditation can be achieved. As in the case of the mental defilements, stray thoughts will be entirely excluded only at the stage of Arahatship, when the perfect mindfulness thereby obtained keeps unfailing watch at the door of the mind.

If they are to shape our attitude, all these facts about the three kinds of disturbing factors must be given full weight and be fully absorbed by our mind. Then, in these three disturbing factors, the noble truth of suffering will manifest itself to the meditator very incisively through his own personal experience: “Not to obtain what one wants is suffering.” The three other noble truths should also be exemplified by reference to the same situation. In such a way, even when dealing with impediments, the meditator will be within the domain of Satipaṭṭhāna. He will be engaged in the mindful awareness of the Four Noble Truths – a part of the contemplation of mental objects *(dhammānupassanā)*.[1] It is characteristic of right mindfulness, and one of its tasks, to relate the actual experiences of life to the truth of the Dhamma, and to use them as opportunities for its practical realization. Already at this preliminary stage devoted to the shaping of a correct and helpful attitude, we have the first successful test of our peaceful weapons: by understanding our adversaries better, we have consolidated our position which was formerly weakened by an emotional approach; and by transforming these adversaries into teachers of the truths, we have won the first advantage over them.

Three Countermeasures

If we are mentally prepared by a realistic view of these three factors antagonistic to meditation, we shall be less inclined to react at once by irritation when they actually arise. We shall be emotionally in a better position to meet them with the nonviolent weapons of which we shall now speak.

There are three devices for countering disturbances that arise in meditation. ‘The three should be applied in succession whenever the preceding device has failed to dispose of the disturbance. All three are applications of bare attention; they differ in the degree and duration of attention given to the disturbance. The guiding rule here is: to give no more mental emphasis to the respective disturbance than is actually required by circumstances.

1. First, one should notice the disturbance clearly, but lightly: that is, without emphasis and without attention to details. After that brief act of noticing, one should try to return to the original subject of meditation. If the disturbance was weak or one’s preceding concentration fairly strong, one may well succeed in resuming contemplation. At that stage, by being careful not to get involved in any “conversation” or argument with the intruder, we shall on our part not give it a reason to stay long; and in a good number of cases the disturbance will soon depart like a visitor who does not receive a very warm welcome. That curt dismissal may often enable us to return to our original meditation without any serious disturbance to the composure of mind.

The non-violent device here is: to apply bare attention to the disturbance, but with a minimum of response to it, and with a mind bent on withdrawal. This is the very way in which the Buddha himself dealt with inopportune visitors, as described in the Mahāsuññata Sutta: “…with a mind bent on seclusion… and withdrawn, his conversation aiming at dismissing (those visitors).” Similar was Shantideva’s advice on how to deal with fools: if one cannot avoid them, one should treat them “with the indifferent politeness of a gentlemen.”

2. If, however, the disturbance persists, one should repeat the application of bare attention again and again, patiently and calmly; and it may be that the disturbance will vanish when it has spent its force. Here the attitude is to meet the repeated occurrence of a disturbance by a reiterated “No, “ a determined refusal to be deflected from one’s course. This is the attitude of patience and firmness. The capacity for watchful observation has to be aided here by the capacity to wait and to hold one’s ground.

These two devices will generally be successful with incidental stray thoughts and daydreams, which are feeble by nature, but the other two types of disturbances, the external ones and defilements, may also yield quite often.

3. But if, for some reason, they do *not* yield, one should deliberately turn one’s full attention to the disturbance and make it an object of knowledge. Thus one transforms it from a *disturbance* to meditation into a legitimate *object* of meditation. One may continue with that new object until the external or internal cause for attending to it has ceased; or, if it proves satisfactory, one may even retain it for the rest of that session.

For instance, when disturbed by a persistent noise, we should give the noise our undivided attention, but we should take care to distinguish the object itself from our reaction to it. For example, if resentment arises, it should be clearly recognized in its own nature whenever it arises. In doing so we shall be practising the contemplation of mind-objects *(dhammānupassanā)* according to the following passage of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: “He knows the ear and sounds, and the fetter (e.g. resentment) arising through both.” If the noise is intermittent or of varying intensity, one will easily be able to discern the rise and fall *(udayabbaya)* in its occurrence. In that way one will add to one’s direct insight into impermanency *(aniccata)*.

The attitude towards recurrent mental defilements, such as thoughts of lust and restlessness, should be similar. One should face them squarely, but distinguish them from one’s reaction to them, e.g. connivance, fear, resentment, irritation. In doing so, one is making use of the device of “naming,” and one will reap the benefits mentioned above. In the recurrent waves of passion or restlessness, one will likewise learn to distinguish gradually phases of “high” and “low,” their “ups and downs,” and may also gain other helpful knowledge about their behaviour. By that procedure, one again remains entirely within the range of Satipaṭṭhāna by practising the contemplation of the state of mind *(cittānupassanā)* and of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā:* attention to the hindrances).

This method of transforming disturbances to meditation into objects of meditation, as simple as it is ingenious, may be regarded as the culmination of non-violent procedure. It is a device very characteristic of the spirit of Satipaṭṭhāna, to make use of all experiences as aids on the path. In that way enemies are turned into friends; for all these disturbances and antagonistic forces have become our teachers, and teachers, whoever they may be, should be regarded as friends.

We cannot forego to quote here a passage from a noteworthy little book, *The Little Locksmith* by Katherine Butler Hathaway, a moving human document of fortitude and practical wisdom acquired by suffering:

I am shocked by the ignorance and wastefulness with which persons who should know better throw away the things they do not like. They throw away experiences, people, marriages, situations, all sorts of things because they do not like them. If you throw away a thing, it is gone. Where you had something you have nothing. Your hands are empty, they have nothing to work on. Whereas, almost all those things which get thrown away are capable of being worked over by a little magic into just the opposite of what they were.... But most human beings never remember at all that in almost every bad situation there is the possibility of a transformation by which the undesirable may be changed into the desirable.

We said before that the occurrence of the three disturbing elements cannot always be prevented. They are parts of our world, and their coming and going follows its own laws irrespective of our approval or disapproval. But by applying bare attention we can avoid being swept away or dislodged by them. By taking a firm and calm stand on the secure ground of mindfulness, we shall repeat in a modest degree, but in an essentially identical way, the historic situation under the Bodhi Tree. When Mara, the Evil One, at the head of his army, claimed the soil on which the future Buddha sat, the latter refused to budge. Trusting in the power of mindfulness, we may confidently repeat the Bodhisatta's aspiration on that occasion: *Ma mam thana acavi!* "May he (Mara) not dislodge me from this place;' (Padhana Sutta).

Let the intruders come and go. Like all the other members of that vast unceasing procession of mental and physical events that pass before our observant eyes in the practice of bare attention, they arise, and having arisen, they pass away.

Our advantage here is the obvious fact that two thought moments cannot be present at the same time. Attention refers, strictly speaking, not to the present but to the moment that has just passed away. Thus, as long as mindfulness holds sway, there will be no "disturbance" or "defiled thought." This gives us the chance to hold on to that secure ground of an "observer's post," our own potential "throne of enlightenment."

By the quietening and neutralizing influence of detached observation as applied in our three devices, the interruptions of meditation will increasingly lose the sting of irritation, and thereby their disturbing effect. This will prove to be an act of true *viraga* (dispassion), which literally means "decolouring." When these experiences are stripped of the emotional tinge that excites towards lust, aversion, irritation and other defilements of the mind, they will appear in their true nature as bare phenomena *(suddha-dhamma)*.

The non-violent procedure of bare attention endows the meditator with the light but sure touch so essential for handling the sensitive, evasive, and refractory nature of the mind. It also enables him to deal smoothly with the various difficult situations and obstacles met with in daily life. To illustrate the even quality of energy required for attaining to the meditative absorptions, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)* describes a test which students of surgery in ancient days had to undergo as a proof of their skill. A lotus leaf was placed in a bowl of water, and the pupil had to make an incision through the length of the leaf, without cutting it entirely or submerging it. He who applied an excess of force either cut the leaf into two or pressed it into the water, while the timid one did not even dare to scratch it. In fact, something like the gentle but firm hand of the surgeon is required in mental training, and this skilful, well-balanced touch will be the natural outcome of the non-violent procedure in the practice of bare attention.

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3. STOPPING AND SLOWING DOWN

Keeping Still

For a full and unobstructed unfoldment of the mind's capacities, the influence of two complimentary forces is *needed: activating and restraining.* That twofold need was recognized by the Buddha, the great knower of mind. He advised that the faculties of energy *(viriy'indriya)* and of concentration *(samadh'indriya)* should be kept equally strong and well balanced.* Furthermore, he recommended three of the seven factors of enlightenment *(bojjhanga)* as suitable for rousing the mind, and another three for calming it.** In both cases, among the spiritual faculties and the enlightenment factors, it is mindfulness that not only watches over their equilibrium, but also activates those that are sluggish and restrains those that are too intense.

Mindfulness, though seemingly of a passive nature, is in fact an activating force. It makes the mind alert, and alertness is indispensable for all purposeful activity. In the present inquiry, however, we shall be mainly concerned with the *restraining* power of mindfulness. We shall examine how it makes for disentanglement and detachment, and how it positively helps in the development of the mental qualities required for the work of deliverance.

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* See Path of Purification, pp. 135 f.

** Ibid, pp. 136 ff. The three rousing factors are investigation, energy and rapture; the three calming ones, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity.

In practising bare attention, we *keep still* at the mental and spatial place of observation, amidst the loud demands of the inner and outer world. Mindfulness possesses the strength of tranquillity, the capacity for deferring action and applying the brake, for *stopping* rash interference and for suspending judgement while pausing to observe facts and to reflect upon them wisely. It also brings a wholesome *slowing down* in the impetuosity of thought, speech and action. Keeping still and stopping, pausing and slowing down – these will be our key words when speaking now of the restraining effect of bare attention.

An ancient Chinese book states:

"In making things end, and in making things start, there is nothing more glorious than *keeping still.*"

In the light of the Buddha's teaching, the true "end of things" is Nibbana which is called the *"stilling* of formations" *(sankharanam vupasamo),* that is, their final end or cessation. It is also called "the stopping" *(nirodha).* The "things" or "formations" meant here are the conditioned and impersonal phenomena rooted in craving and ignorance. The end of formations comes to be by the end of "forming," that is, by the end of world-creating kammic activities. It is the "end of the world" and of suffering, which the Buddha proclaimed cannot be reached by walking, migrating or transmigrating, but can be found within ourselves. That end of the world is heralded by each deliberate act of *keeping still, stopping, or pausing.* "Keeping still," in that highest sense, means stopping the accumulation of kamma, abstaining from our unceasing concern with evanescent things, abstaining from perpetually adding to our entanglements in samsara – the round of repeated birth and death. By following the way of mindfulness, by training ourselves to keep still and pause in the attitude of bare attention, we refuse to take up the world's persistent challenge to our dispositions for greed or hatred. We protect ourselves against rash and delusive judgements; we refrain from blindly plunging into the whirlpool of interfering action with all its inherent dangers.

He who abstains from interfering is everywhere secure.

SUTTA NIPATA, V. 953

He who keeps still and knows where to stop will not meet danger.

TAO-TE-CHING, CHAPTER 44

The Chinese saying quoted earlier states in its second part that there is nothing more glorious in *making things start* than in keeping still. Explained in the Buddhist sense, these things effectively started by keeping still are "the things (or qualities) making for decrease of kammic accumulation." In dealing with them, we may follow the traditional division of mental training into morality (or conduct), concentration (or tranquillity) and wisdom (or insight). All three are decisively helped by the attitude of *keeping still* cultivated by bare attention.

1. *Conduct.* How can we improve our conduct, its moral quality and its skill in taking right decisions? If we earnestly desire such an improvement, it will generally be wisest to choose the line of least resistance.

If we turn too quickly against those shortcomings deeply rooted in old habits or in powerful impulses, we might suffer discouraging defeat. We should pay attention first to our blemishes of action and speech and our errors of judgement caused by thoughtlessness and rashness. Of these there are many. In our lives there are numerous instances where one short moment of reflection might have prevented a false step, and thereby warded off a long chain of misery or moral guilt that started with a single moment of thoughtlessness. But how can we curb our rash reactions, and replace them by moments of mindfulness and reflection? To do so will depend on our capacity to *stop and pause,* to apply the brakes at the right time, and this we can learn by practising bare attention. In that practice we shall train ourselves "to look and wait," to suspend reactions or slow them down. We shall learn it first the easy way, in situations of our own choice, within the limited field of experiences met with during the periods of meditative practice. When facing again and again the incidental sense impressions, feelings or stray thoughts which interrupt our concentration; when curbing again and again our desire to respond to them in some way; when succeeding again and again in keeping still in face of them – we shall be preparing ourselves to preserve that inner stillness in the wider and unprotected field of everyday life. We shall have acquired a presence of mind that will enable us to pause and stop, even if we are taken by surprise or are suddenly provoked or tempted.

Our present remarks refer to those blemishes of conduct liable to arise through thoughtlessness and rashness, but which may be more or less easily checked through mindfulness. Dexterity in dealing with these will also affect those more obstinate deviations from moral conduct rooted in strong passionate impulses or in deeply ingrained bad habits. The increased tranquillity of mind achieved in keeping still for bare attention will restrain the impetuosity of passions. The acquired habit of pausing and stopping will act as a brake to the ingrained habits of indulging in unwholesome deeds.

By being able to keep still for bare attention, or to pause for wise reflection, very often the first temptation to lust, the first wave of anger, the first mist of delusion, will disappear without causing serious entanglement. At which point the current of unwholesome thought process is stopped will depend on the quality of mindfulness. If mindfulness is keen, it will succeed at a very early point in calling a stop to a series of defiled thoughts or actions before we are carried along by them too far. Then the respective defilements will not grow beyond their initial strength, less effort will be required to check them, and fewer kammic entanglements, or none, will follow.

Let us take the example of a pleasant visual object which has aroused our liking. At first that liking might not be very active and insistent. If at this point the mind is already able to keep still for detached observation or reflection, the visual perception can easily be divested of its still very slight admixture of lust. The object becomes registered as "just something seen that has caused a pleasant feeling," or the attraction felt is sublimated into a quiet aesthetic pleasure. But if that earliest chance has been missed, the liking will grow into attachment and into the desire to possess. If now a stop is called, the thought of desire may gradually lose its strength; it will not easily turn into an insistent craving, and no actual attempts to get possession of the desired object will follow. But if the current of lust is still unchecked, then the thought of desire may express itself by speech in asking for the object or even demanding it with impetuous words. That is, unwholesome mental kamma is followed by unwholesome verbal kamma. A refusal will cause the original current of lust to branch out into additional streams of mental defilements, either sadness or anger. But if even at that late stage one can stop for quiet reflection or bare attention, accept the refusal, and renounce wish-fulfilment, further complications will be avoided. However, if clamouring words are followed by unwholesome bodily kamma, and if, driven by craving, one tries to get possession of the desired object by stealth or force, then the kammic entanglement is complete and its consequences must be experienced in their full impact. But still, if even after the completion of the evil act, one stops for reflection, it will not be in vain. For the mindfulness that arises in the form of remorseful retrospection will preclude a hardening of character and may prevent a repetition of the same action.

The Exalted One once said to his son, Rahula (Majjhima 61):

"Whatever action you intend to perform, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action.... If, in considering it, you realize: 'This action which I intend to

perform will be harmful to myself, or harmful to others or harmful to both; it will be an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering, – then you should certainly not perform that action.

"Also while you are performing an action, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action… If, in considering it, you realize: 'This action which I am performing is harmful to myself, or harmful to others, or harmful to both; it is an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering' – then you should desist from such an action.

"Also after you have performed an action, by body, speech or mind, you should consider that action…. If, in considering it, you realize: 'This action which I have performed has been harmful to myself, or harmful to others, or harmful to both; it was an unwholesome action, producing suffering, resulting in suffering' – then you should in the future refrain from it."

2. *Tranquillity*. We shall now consider how stopping for bare attention also helps one to attain and strengthen tranquillity *(samatha)* in its double sense: general peace of mind and meditative concentration.

By developing the habit of pausing for bare attention, it becomes increasingly easier to withdraw into one's own inner stillness when unable to escape bodily from the loud, insistent noises of the outer world. It will be easier to forego useless reactions to the foolish speech or deeds of others. When the blows of fate are particularly hard and incessant, a mind trained in bare attention will find a refuge in the haven of apparent passivity or watchful non-action, from which position it will be able to wait patiently until the storms have passed. There are situations in life when it is best to allow things to come to their natural end. He who is able to keep still and wait will often succeed where aggressiveness or busy activity would have been vanquished. Not only in critical situations, but also in the normal course of life, the experience won by observant keeping still will convince us that we need not actively respond to every impression we receive, or regard every encounter with people or things as a challenge to our interfering activity.

By refraining from busying ourselves unnecessarily, external frictions will be reduced and the internal tensions they bring will loosen up. Greater harmony and peace will pervade the life of every day, bridging the gap between normal life and the tranquillity of meditation. Then there will be fewer of those disturbing inner reverberations of everyday restlessness which, in a coarse or subtle form, invade the hours of meditation, producing bodily and mental unrest. Consequently, the hindrance of agitation, a chief obstacle to concentration, will appear less often and will be easier to overcome when it arises.

By cultivating the attitude of bare attention as often as opportunity offers, the centrifugal forces of mind, making for mental distraction, will peter out; the centripetal tendency, turning the mind inward and making for concentration, will gather strength. Craving will no longer run out in pursuit of a variety of changing objects.

Regular practice of sustained attention to a continuous series of events prepares the mind for sustained concentration on a single object, or a limited number of objects, in the strict practice of meditation. Firmness or steadiness of mind, another important factor in concentration, will likewise be cultivated.

Thus, the practice of keeping still, pausing and stopping for bare attention, fosters several salient components of meditative tranquillity: calmness, concentration, firmness, and reduction of the multiplicity of objects. It raises the average level of normal consciousness and brings it closer to the level of the meditative mind. This is an important point because often too wide a gap between these two mental levels repeatedly frustrates attempts at mental concentration and hinders the achievement of smooth continuity in meditative practice.

In the sequence of the seven factors of enlightenment, we find that the enlightenment factor of tranquillity *(passaddhi sambojjhanga)* precedes that of concentration (*samadhi-sambojjhanga).* Expressing the same fact, the Buddha says: “If tranquillized within, the mind will become concentrated.” Now in the light of our previous remarks, we shall better understand these statements.

3. *Insight.* It has been said by the Exalted One: “He whose mind is concentrated sees things as they really are.” Therefore, all those ways by which bare attention strengthens concentration also provide a supporting condition for the development of insight. But there is also a more direct and specific help which insight receives from keeping still in bare attention.

Generally, we are more concerned with handling and using things than with knowing them in their true nature. Thus we usually grasp in haste the very first few signals conveyed to us by a perception. Then, through deeply ingrained habit, those signals evoke a standard response by way of judgements such as good-bad, pleasant-unpleasant, useful-harmful, right-wrong. These judgements, by which we define the objects in relation to ourselves, lead to corresponding reactions by word or deed. Only rarely does attention dwell upon a common or familiar object for any longer time than is needed to receive the first few signals. So, for the most part, we perceive things in a fragmentary manner and thence misconceive them. Further, only the very first phase of the object's life-span, or a little more, comes into the focus of our attention. One may not even be consciously aware that the object is a process with an extension in time – a beginning and an end; that it has many aspects and relations beyond those casually perceived in a limited situation; that, in brief, it has a kind of evanescent individuality of its own. A world perceived in this superficial way will consist of shapeless little lumps of experiences marked by a few subjectively selected signs or symbols. The symbols chosen are determined mainly by the individual's self-interest; sometimes they are even misapplied. The shadow-like world that results includes not only the outer environment and other persons, but also a good part of one's own bodily and mental processes. These, too, become subjected to the same superficial manner of conceptualization. The Buddha points out four basic misconceptions that result from distorted perceptions and unmethodical attention: taking the impure for pure, the impermanent for lasting, the painful and pain-bringing for pleasant, and the impersonal for a self or something belonging to the self. When the seal of self-reference is thus stamped again and again upon the world of everyday experience, the basic misconception, "This belongs to me" *(attaniya)* will steadily put forth roots into all the bodily and mental factors of our being. Like the hair-roots of a plant, these will be fine, but firm and widespread – to such an extent, in fact, that the notions of "I" and "mine" will hardly be shaken by mere intellectual convictions about the non-existence of a self *(anatta)*.

These grave consequences issue from that fundamental perceptual situation: our rush into hasty or habitual reactions after receiving the first few signals from our perceptions. But if we muster the restraining forces of mindfulness and pause for bare attention, the material and mental processes that form the objects of mind at the given moment will reveal themselves to us more fully and more truly. No longer dragged at once into the whirlpool of self-reference, allowed to unfold themselves before the watchful eye of mindfulness, they will disclose the diversity of their aspects and the wide net of their correlations and interconnections. The connection with self-interest, so narrow and often falsifying, will recede into the background, dwarfed by the wider view now gained. The processes observed display in their serial occurrence and in their component parts a constant birth and death, a rise and a fall. Thereby the facts of change and impermanence impress themselves on the mind with growing intensity. The same discernment of rise and fall dissolves the false conceptions of unity created under the influence of the egocentric attitude. Self-reference uncritically overrides diversity; it lumps things together under the preconceptions of *being* a self or *belonging* to a self. But bare attention reveals these sham unities as impersonal and conditioned phenomena. Facing thus again and again the evanescent, dependent and impersonal nature of life-processes within and without, we will discover their monotony and unsatisfactory nature: in other words, the truth of suffering. Thus, by the simple device of slowing down, pausing and keeping still for bare attention, all three of the characteristics of existence – impermanence, suffering, and non-self – will open themselves to penetrative insight *(vipassana).*

Spontaneity

An acquired or strengthened habit of pausing mindfully before acting does not exclude a wholesome spontaneity of response. On the contrary, through training, the practice of pausing, stopping, and keeping still for bare attention will itself become quite spontaneous. It will grow into a selective mechanism of the mind that, with an increasing reliability and swiftness of response, can prevent the upsurge of evil or unwise impulses. Without such a skill we may intellectually realise those impulses to be unwholesome, but still succumb to them due to their own powerful spontaneity. The practice of pausing mindfully serves, therefore, to replace unwholesome spontaneity or habits by wholesome ones grounded in our better knowledge and nobler intentions.

Just as certain reflex movements automatically protect the body, similarly the mind needs spontaneous spiritual and moral self-protection. The practice of bare attention will provide this vital function. A person of average moral standards instinctively shrinks from thoughts of theft or murder. With the help of the method of bare attention, the range of such spontaneous moral brakes can be vastly extended and ethical sensitivity greatly heightened.

In an untrained mind, noble tendencies and right thoughts are often assailed by the sudden outbreak of passions and prejudices. They either succumb or assert themselves only with difficulty after an inner struggle. But if the spontaneity of the unwholesome is checked or greatly reduced, as described above, our good impulses and wise reflections will have greater scope to emerge and express themselves freely and spontaneously. Their natural flow will give us greater confidence in the power of the good within us; it will also carry more conviction for others. That spontaneity of the good will not be erratic, for it will have deep and firm roots in previous methodical training. Here appears a way by which a premeditated good thought *(sasankharika-kusala)* may be transformed into a spontaneous good thought *(asankharikakusala-citta)*. According to the psychology of the Abhidhamma, such a thought, if combined with knowledge, takes the first place in the scale of ethical values. In this way we shall achieve a practical understanding of a saying in *The Secret of the Golden Flower:** "If one attains intentionally to an unintentional state one has comprehension." This saying invites a paraphrase in Pali terms: *Sasankharena asankharikam pattabbam,* "by premeditated intentional effort spontaneity can be won."

If the numerous aids to mental growth and liberation found in the Buddha's teaching are wisely utilized, there is actually nothing that can finally withstand the Satipaṭṭhāna method; and this method starts with the simple practice of learning to pause and stop for bare attention.

Slowing-down

Against the impetuosity, rashness and heedlessness of the untrained mind, the practice of pausing and stopping sets up a slowing-down. The demands of modern life, however deliberate, make it impracticable to introduce such a slow-down of functions into the routine of the average working day. But as an antidote against the harmful consequences of the hectic speed of modern life, it is all the more important to cultivate that practice in one's leisure hours, especially in periods of strict Satipaṭṭhāna practice. Such practice will also bestow the worldly benefits of greater calm, efficiency and skill in one's daily round of work.

For the purpose of meditative development, slowing-down serves as an effective training in heedfulness, sense-control, and concentration. But apart from that, it has a more specific significance for meditative practice. In the commentary to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, it is said that the slowing down of movements may help in *regaining lost concentration* on a chosen object. A monk, so we read, had bent his arm quickly without remembering his subject of meditation as his rule of practice demanded. On becoming aware of that omission he took his arm back to its previous position and repeated the movement mindfully. The subject of meditation referred to was probably "clearly comprehending action," as mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: "In bending and stretching he acts with clear comprehension."

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* A treatise of Chinese Taoism, strongly influenced by Mahayana.

The slowing-down of certain bodily movements during strict meditative training is particularly helpful in gaining *insight knowledge (vipassana-nana),* especially the direct awareness of change and non-self. To' a great extent, it is the rapidity of movement that strengthens the illusion of unity, identity, and substantiality in what is actually a complex evanescent process. Therefore, in the strict practice of Satipaṭṭhāna, the slowing down of such actions as walking, bending and stretching, so as to discern the several phases of each movement, provides a powerful aid for direct insight into the three characteristics of all phenomena. The meditator's contemplation will gain increasing force and significance if he notices clearly how each partial phase of the process observed arises and ceases by itself, and nothing of it goes over or "transmigrates" to the next phase.

Under the influence of pausing for bare attention, the average rhythm of our everyday actions, speech and thoughts will also become more quiet and peaceful. Slowing down the hurried rhythm of life means that thoughts, feelings, and perceptions will be able to complete the entire length of their natural lifetime. Full awareness will extend up to their end phase: to their last vibrations and reverberations. Too often that end phase is cut off by an impatient grasping at new impressions, or by hurrying on to the next stage of a line of thought before the earlier one has been clearly comprehended. This is one of the main reasons for the disorderly state of the average mind, which is burdened by a vast amount of indistinct or fragmentary perceptions, stunted emotions and undigested ideas. Slowing-down will prove an effective device for recovering the fullness and clarity of consciousness. A fitting simile, and at the same time an actual example, is the procedure called for in the practice of mindfulness of breathing *(anapanasati):* mindfulness has to cover the whole extent of the breath, its beginning, middle and end. This is what is meant by the passage in the sutta, "Experiencing the *whole* (breath-) body, I shall breathe in and out." Similarly, the entire "breath" or rhythm of our life will become deeper and fuller if, through slowing-down, we get used to sustained attention.

The habit of prematurely cutting off processes of thought, or slurring over them, has assumed serious proportions in the man of modern urban civilization. Restlessly he clamours for ever new stimuli in increasingly quicker succession just as he demands increasing speed in his means of locomotion. This rapid bombardment of impressions has gradually blunted his sensitivity, and thus he always needs new stimuli, louder, coarser, and more variegated. Such a process, if not checked, can end only in disaster. Already we see at large a decline of finer aesthetic susceptibility and a growing incapacity for genuine natural joy. The place of both is taken by a hectic, short-breathed excitement incapable of giving any true aesthetic or emotional satisfaction. "Shallow mental breath" is to a great extent responsible for the growing superficiality of "civilized man" and for the frightening spread of nervous disorders 'in the West. It may well become the start of a general deterioration of human consciousness in its qualitative level, range and strength. This danger threatens all those, in the East as well as in the West, who lack adequate spiritual protection from the impact of technical civilization. Satipaṭṭhāna can make an important contribution to remedying this Situations in the way we have briefly indicated here. Thus the method will prove beneficial from the worldly point of view as well.

Here, however, we are chiefly concerned with the psychological aspects of mindfulness and their significance for meditative development. Sustained attention, helped by slowing-down, will affect the quality of consciousness mainly in three ways: (a) in intensifying consciousness; (b) in clarifying the object's characteristic features; and (c) in revealing the object's relatedness.

(a) An object of sustained attention will exert a particularly *strong and long-lasting* impact on the mind. Its influence will be felt not only throughout the thought-series immediately following the particular perception, but may also extend far into the future. It is that causal efficacy which is the measure-of the *intensity of consciousness.*

(b) Sustained attention leads to a *fuller picture* of the object in all its aspects. Generally, the first impression we gain of any new sense-object or idea will be its most striking feature; it is this aspect of the object which captures our attention up to the culminating point of the impact. But the object also displays other aspects or characteristics, and is capable of exercising other functions, than those we initially notice. These may be less obvious to us or subjectively less interesting; but still, they may be even more important. There may also be cases where our first impression is entirely deceptive. Only if we sustain our attention beyond that first impact will the object reveal itself more fully. In the downward course of the first perceptual wave the prejudicing force of the first impact lessens; and it is only then, in that end phase, that the object will yield a wider range of detail, a more complete picture of itself. It is therefore only by sustained attention that we can obtain a *clearer understanding of an object's characteristic features.*

(c) Among the characteristic features of any object, physical or mental, there is one class we often overlook due to hasty or superficial attention, and therefore needs to be treated separately. This is the *relatedness* of the object. The object's relatedness extends back to its past – to its origin, causes, reasons, and logical precedents; it also extends outward to embrace the total context – its background, environment, and presently active influences. We can never fully understand things if we view them in artificial isolation. We have to see them as part of a wider pattern, in their conditioned and conditioning nature; and this can be done only with the help of sustained attention.

Subliminal Influences

The three ways of heightening consciousness just discussed are evidently of prime importance for the development of insight. When consciousness is intensified, and its objective field clarified and discerned in its relational structure, the ground is prepared for "seeing things according to reality." But besides its obvious direct influence, this threefold process also has an indirect influence which is no less powerful and important: it strengthens and sharpens the mind's subliminal faculties of subconscious organization, memory and intuition. These again, on their part, nourish and consolidate the progress of liberating insight. The insight aided by them is like the mountain lake of the canonical simile: it is fed not only by the outside rains, but also by springs welling up from within its own depths. The insight nourished by these "underground" subliminal resources of the mind will have deep roots. The meditative results that it brings cannot be lost easily, even with unliberated worldlings who are still subject to relapse.

1. Perceptions or thoughts which have been objects of sustained attention make a stronger impact on the mind and reveal their characteristic features more distinctly than when attention is slack. Thus, when they

sink into the subconscious, they occupy there a special position. This holds true for all three ways of enhancing the consciousness of an object. (a) In a process of consciousness, if attention is as strong in the end phase as in the earlier phases, then when the process is finished and the mind lapses back into subconsciousness, the latter will be more amenable to conscious control. (b) If an impression or idea has been marked by numerous distinct characteristics, then when it fades from immediate awareness, it will not be so easily lost in the vague contents of the subconscious or dragged by passionate biases into false subconscious associations. (c) The correct comprehension of the object's relatedness similarly will protect the experience from being merged with indistinct subconscious material. Perceptions or thoughts of enhanced intensity and clarity, absorbed into the subconscious, remain more articulate and more accessible than contents originating from hazy or "stunned" impressions. It will be easier to convert them into full consciousness and they will be less unaccountable in their hidden effects upon the mind. If, through an improvement in the quality and range of mindfulness, the number of such matured impressions increases, the results might be a subtle change in the very structure of subconsciousness itself.

2. It will be evident from our earlier remarks that those impressions which we have called "matured" or "more accessible and convertible," lend themselves more easily and more correctly to recollection – more easily because of their greater intensity, more correctly because their clearly marked features protect them from

being distorted by false associative images or ideas.

Remembering them in their context and relatedness works both ways – it promotes both easier and more correct recollection. Thus *sati* in its meaning and function of mindfulness helps to strengthen *sati* in its meaning and function of memory.

3. The influence of sustained attention on the subconscious and on memory brings a deepening and strengthening of the faculty of intuition, particularly the intuitive insight which chiefly concerns us here. Intuition is not a gift from the unknown. Like any other mental faculty, it arises out of specific conditions. In this case the primary conditions are latent memories of perceptions and thoughts stored in the subconscious. Obviously, the memories providing the most fertile soil for the growth of intuition will be those marked by greater intensity, clarity and wealth of distinctive marks; for it is these, that are most accessible. Here, too, the preserved relatedness of the impressions will contribute much. Recollections of that type will have a more organic character than memories of bare or vague isolated facts, and they will fall more easily into new patterns of meaning and significance. These more articulate memory images will be a strong stimulation and aid for the intuitive faculty. Silently, in the hidden depths of the subliminal mind, the work of collecting and organizing the subconscious material of experience and knowledge goes on until it is ripe to emerge as an *intuition.* The break-through of that intuition is sometimes occasioned by quite ordinary happenings. However, though seemingly ordinary, these events

may have a strong evocative power if previously they had been made objects of sustained attention. Slowing-down and pausing for bare attention will uncover the depth dimension of the simple things of everyday life, and thus provide stimuli for the intuitive faculty. This applies also to the intuitive penetration of the Four Noble Truths that culminates in liberation *(arahatta)*. The scriptures record many instances of monks who could not arrive at intuitive penetration when engaged in the actual practice of insight meditation. The flash of intuition struck them on quite different occasions: when stumbling against a rock or catching sight of a forest fire, a mirage, or a lump of froth in a river. We meet here another confirmation of that seemingly paradoxical saying that "intentionally an unintentional state may be won." By deliberately turning the full light of mindfulness on the smallest events and actions of everyday life, eventually the liberating wisdom may arise.

Sustained attention not only provides the nourishing soil for the *growth* of intuition, it also makes possible the fuller utilization and even repetition of the intuitive moment. Men of inspiration in various fields of creative activity have often deplored their common experience; the flash of intuition strikes so suddenly and vanishes so quickly that frequently the slow response of the mind hardly catches the last glimpse of it. But if the mind has been trained in observant pausing, in slowing down and sustained attention, and if – as indicated above – the subconscious has been influenced, then the intuitive moment too might gain that fuller, slower and stronger rhythm. This being the case, its impact will be strong and clear enough to allow for full use of that flash of intuitive insight. It might even be possible to lead its fading vibrations upward again to a new culmination, similar to the rhythmic repetition of a melody rising again in harmonious development out of the last notes of its first appearance.

The full utilization of a single moment of intuitive insight could be of decisive importance for one's progress toward full realization. If one's mental grip is too weak and one lets those elusive moments of intuitive insight slip away without having utilized them fully for the work of liberation, then they might not recur until many years have passed, or perhaps not at all during the present fife. Skill in sustained attention, however, will allow one to make full use of such opportunities, and slowing-down and pausing during meditative practice is an important aid in acquiring that skill.

Through our treatment of pausing, stopping and slowing-down, one of the traditional definitions of mindfulness found in the Pali scriptures will have become more intelligible in its far-reaching implications: that is, its function of *anapilapanata,* meaning literally, "not floating (or slipping) away." "Like pumpkin-pots on the surface of water," add the commentators, and they continue: "Mindfulness enters deeply into its object, instead of hurrying only over its surface." Therefore, "nonsuperficiality" will be an appropriate rendering of the above Pali term, and a fitting characterization of mindfulness.

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4. DIRECTNESS OF VISION

I wish I could disaccustom myself from everything, so that I might see anew, hear anew, feel anew, Habit spoils our philosophy.

G.C. LICHTENBERG (1742–1799)

In an earlier section we spoke about the impulsive spontaneity of the unwholesome. We have seen how stopping for bare and sustained attention is able to counter, or reduce, our rash impulsive reactions, thus allowing us to face any situation with a fresh mind, with a *directness of vision* unprejudiced by those first spontaneous responses.

By directness of vision we understand a direct view of reality, without any colouring or distorting lenses, without the intrusion of emotional or habitual prejudices and intellectual biases. It means: coming face to face with the bare facts of actuality, seeing them as vividly and freshly as if we were seeing them for the first time.

The Force of Habit

Those spontaneous reactions which so often stand in the way of direct vision do not derive only from our passionate impulses. Very frequently they are the product of *habit*. In that form, they generally have an even stronger and more tenacious hold on us – a hold which may work out either for our good or for our harm. The influence habit exercises for the *good* is seen in the "power of repeated practice." This power protects our achievements and skills – whether manual or mental, worldly or spiritual – against loss or forgetfulness, and converts them from casual, short-lived, imperfect acquisitions into the more secure possession of a quality thoroughly mastered. The *detrimental* effect of habitual spontaneous reactions is manifest in what is called in a derogative sense the "force of habit": its deadening, stultifying and narrowing influence productive of compulsive behaviour of various kinds. In our present context we shall be concerned only with that negative aspect of habit as impeding and obscuring the directness of vision.

As remarked earlier, habitual reactions generally have a stronger influence upon our behaviour than impulsive ones. Our passionate impulses may disappear as suddenly as they have arisen. Though their consequences may be very grave and extend far into the future, their influence is in no way as long lasting and deep reaching as that of habit. Habit spreads its vast and closely meshed net over wide areas of our life and thought, trying to drag in more and more. Our passionate impulses, too, might be caught in that net and thus be transformed from passing outbursts into lasting traits of character. A momentary impulse, an occasional indulgence, a passing whim may by repetition become a habit we find difficult to uproot, a desire hard to control, and finally an automatic function we no longer question. Repeated gratification turns a desire into a habit, and habit left unchecked grows into compulsion.

It sometimes happens that, at an early time, we regard a particular activity or mental attitude as without any special personal importance. The activity or attitude may be morally indifferent and inconsequential. At the start we might find it easy to abandon it or even to exchange it for its opposite, since neither our emotions nor reason bias us towards either alternative. But by repetition, we come to regard the chosen course of action or thought as “pleasant, desirable, and correct,” even as “righteous”; and thus we finally identify it with our character or personality. Consequently, we feel any break in this routine to be unpleasant or wrong. Any outside interference with it we greatly resent, even regarding such interference as a threat to our “vital interests and principles.” In fact at all times primitive minds, whether “civilized” or not, have looked at a stranger with his “strange customs” as an enemy, and have felt his mere unaggressive presence as a challenge or threat.

At the beginning, when no great importance was ascribed to the specific habit, the attachment that gradually formed was directed not so much to the action proper as to the pleasure we derived from undisturbed routine. The strength of that attachment to routine derives partly from the force of physical and mental inertia, so powerful a motive in man. We shall presently refer to another cause for attachment to routine. By force of habit, the particular concern – whether a material object, an activity, or a way of thinking – comes to be invested with such an increase of emotional emphasis, that the attachment to quite unimportant or banal things may become as tenacious as that to our more fundamental needs. Thus the lack of conscious control can turn even the smallest habits into the uncontested masters of our lives. It bestows upon them the dangerous power to limit and rigidify our character and to narrow our freedom of movement – environmental, intellectual and spiritual. Through our subservience to habit, we forge new fetters for ourselves and make ourselves vulnerable to new attachments, aversions, prejudices and predilections; that is, to new suffering. The danger for spiritual development posed by the dominating influence of habit is perhaps more serious today than ever before; for the expansion of habit is particularly noticeable in our present age when specialization and standardization reach into so many varied spheres of life and thought.

Therefore, when considering the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta's words on the formation of fetters, we should also think of the important part played by habit:

> *"… and what fetter arises dependent on both (i.e. the sense organs and sense objects), that he knows well. In what manner the arising of the unarisen fetter comes to be, that he knows well."*

In Buddhist terms, it is preeminently the hindrance of sloth and torpor *(thina-middha nivarana)* which is strengthened by the force of habit, and it is the mental faculties such as agility and pliancy of mind *(kaya* and *citta-lahuta,* etc.)* that are weakened.

This tendency of habits to extend their range is anchored in the very nature of consciousness. It stems not only from the aforementioned passive force of inertia, but in many cases from an active will to dominate and conquer. Certain active types of consciousness, possessing a fair degree of intensity, tend to repeat themselves. Each one struggles to gain ascendancy, to become a centre around which other weaker mental and physical states revolve, adapting themselves to and serving that central disposition. This tendency is never quite undisputed, but still it prevails, and even peripheral or subordinate types of consciousness exhibit the same urge for ascendancy. This is a striking parallel to the self-assertion and domineering tendency of an egocentric individual in his contact with society. Among biological analogies, we may mention the tendency toward expansion shown by cancer and other pathological growths; the tendency toward repetition we meet in the freak mutations which loom as a grave danger at the horizon of our atomic age.

Due to that will to dominate inherent in many types of consciousness, a passing whim may grow into a relatively constant trait of character. If still not satisfied with its position, it may break away entirely from the present combination of life forces until finally, in the process of rebirths, it becomes the very centre of a new personality. There are within us countless seeds

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* About these important qualitative constituents of good, wholesome (kusala) consciousness, see the author's Abhidhamma Studies (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1965), pp.51 f.

for new lives, for innumerable potential "beings," all of whom we should vow to liberate from the wheel of samsara, as the Sixth Zen Patriarch expressed it.*

Detrimental physical or mental habits, may grow strong, not only if fostered deliberately, but also if left unnoticed or unopposed. Much of what has now strong roots in our nature has grown from minute seeds planted in a long-forgotten past (see the Simile of the Creeper, Majjhima 45). This growth of morally bad or otherwise detrimental habits can be effectively checked by gradually developing another habit: that of attending to them mindfully. If we now do deliberately what had become a mechanical performance, and if prior to doing it we pause a while for bare attention and reflection – this will give us a chance to scrutinize the habit and clearly comprehend its purpose and suitability *(satthaka and sappaya-sampajanna).* It will allow us to make a fresh assessment of the situation, to see it directly, unobscured by the mental haze that surrounds a habitual activity with the false assurance: "It is right because it was done before. "Even if a detrimental habit cannot be broken quickly, the reflective pause will counter its unquestioned spontaneity of occurrence. It will stamp it with the seal of repeated scrutiny and resistance, so that on its recurrence it will be weaker and will prove more amenable to our attempts to change or abolish it.

It need hardly be mentioned that habit, which has been rightly called “the wet-nurse of man,” cannot and should not disappear from our life. Let us only remember what a relief it is, particularly in the crowded day and complex life of a city-dweller, to be able to do a great number of things fairly mechanically with, as it were, only “half-powered attention.” Habit brings considerable simplification to our life. It would be an unbearable strain if all our little humdrum activities had to be done with deliberate effort and close attention. In fact, many operations of manual labour, much of the *technique* in art, and even standard procedure in complex intellectual work, generally bring better and more even results through skilled routine performance. Yet that evenness of habitual performance will also reach its end point. Unless enlivened by the creation of new interest, it will show symptoms of fatigue and start to decline.

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* This may be a somewhat ironical reference by that great sage to the fact that the well-known Mahayanic Bodhisattva vow of liberating all beings of the universe is often taken much too lightheartedly by many of his fellow Mahayanists.

Of course it would be absurd to advocate that all our little habits be abolished, for many are innocuous and even useful. But we should regularly ask ourselves whether we still have control over them, whether we can give them up or alter them at will. We can answer this question for ourselves in two ways: by attending to our habitual actions mindfully for a certain period of time, and second, by actually giving them up temporarily in cases where this will not have any harmful or disturbing effects upon ourselves or others . If we turn on them the light of *direct vision,* looking at them or performing them as if for the first time, these little routine activities, and the habitual sights around us, will assume a new glow of interest and stimulation. This also holds good for our professional occupation and its environment, and for our close human relationships if they should have become stale by habit. The relationship to one's marriage partner, to friends, to colleagues, may thus receive a great rejuvenation. A fresh and direct vision will also reveal that one can relate to people or do things in a different and more beneficial way than one did before by force of habit.

An acquired capacity to give up minor habits will prove its worth in the fight against more dangerous proclivities. It will also come to our aid at times when we are faced with serious changes in our life which forcefully deprive us of fundamental habits. Loosening the hardened soil of our routine behaviour and thoughts will have an enlivening effect on our vital energy, our mental vigour, and our power of imagination. But what is most important, into that loosened soil we shall be able to plant the seeds of vigorous spiritual progress.

Associative Thought

Mental habituation to standard reactions, to sequences of activity, to judgements of people or things proceeds by way of associative thinking. From the objects, ideas, situations and people that we encounter, we select certain distinctive marks, and associate these marks with our own response to them. If these encounters recur, they are associated first with those marks selected earlier, and then with our original or strongest response. Thus these marks become a signal for releasing a standard reaction, which may consist of a long sequence of connected acts or thoughts familiar through repeated practice or experience. This way of functioning makes it unnecessary for us to apply new effort and painstaking scrutiny to each single step in such a sequence. The result is a great simplification of life, permitting us to release energy for other tasks. In fact, in the evolution of the human mind, associative thinking was a progressive step of decisive importance. It enabled us to learn from experience, and thus led up to the discovery and application of causal laws.

Yet along with these benefits, associative thinking can also bring many grave dangers if it is applied faultily or thoughtlessly and not carefully controlled. Let us draw up a partial list of these danger points:

1. Associative thinking, recurring again and again in similar situations, may easily perpetuate and strengthen faulty or incomplete initial observations, errors of judgement, and emotional prejudices such as love, hate and pride.
2. Incomplete observations and restricted viewpoints in judgement, sufficient to deal with one particular situation, may prove quite inadequate and entail grave consequences if mechanically applied to changed circumstances.
3. Due to misdirected associative thinking, a strong instinctive dislike may be felt for things, places or persons which in some way are merely reminiscent of unpleasant experiences, but actually have no connection with them.

These briefly-stated instances show how vital it is for us to scrutinize from time to time the mental grooves of our associative thoughts, and to review the various habits and stereotype reactions deriving from them. In other words, we must step out of our ruts, regain a direct vision of things, and make a fresh appraisal of our habits in the light of that vision.

If we look once again over the list of potential dangers deriving from uncontrolled associative thinking, we shall better understand the Buddha's insistence upon getting to the bedrock of experience. In the profound and terse stanzas called "The Cave," included in the *Sutta Nipata,* the Buddha says that the "full penetration of *sense impression (phassa)* will make one free from greed" and that "by understanding perception *(sañña),* one will be able to cross the flood of samsara" (stanza 778 f.).* 1 By placing mindfulness as a guard at the very first gate through which thoughts enter the mind, we shall be able to control the incomers much more easily, and shut out unwanted intruders. Thus the purity of "luminous consciousness" can be maintained against "adventitious defilements" (Anguttara, 1:51).

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta provides a systematic training for inducing direct, fresh, and undistorted vision. The training covers the entire personality in its physical and mental aspects, and includes the whole world of experience. The methodical application of the several exercises to oneself *(ajjhatta),* to others *(bahiddha),* and alternatingly to both, will help uncover erroneous conceptions due to misdirected associative thinking and misapplied analogies.

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* Compare also the passage on the significance of sense impression (or contact) in the concluding sections of the Brahmajala Sutta (Digha 1).

The principal types of false associative thinking are covered, in the terminology of the Dhamma, by the four kinds of *misapprehension or perverted views (vipallasa),* which wrongly take (1) what is impermanent for permanent, (2) what is painful, or conducive to pain, for happiness, (3) what has no self and is unsubstantial for a self or an abiding substance, and (4) what is impure for beautiful. These perverted views arise through a false apprehension of the characteristic marks of things. Under the influence of our passions and false theories, we perceive things selectively in a one-sided or erroneous way, and then associate them wrongly with other ideas. By applying bare attention to our perceptions and impressions, gradually we can free them from these misapprehensions, progressing steadily towards the *direct vision* of things as they really are.

The Sense of Urgency

One who has clear and direct vision, stirred to a sense of urgency *(samvega)* by things which are deeply moving, will experience a release of energy and courage enabling him to break through his timid hesitations and his rigid routine of life and thought. If that sense of urgency is kept alive, it will bestow the earnestness and persistence required for the work of liberation.

Thus said the teachers of old:

"This very world here is our field of action.

It harbours the unfoldment of the holy path, And many things to break complacency.

Be stirred by things which may well move the heart, And being stirred, strive wisely and fight on!”

Our closest surroundings are full of stirring things. If we generally do not perceive them as such, that is because habit has made our vision dull and our heart insensitive. The same thing happens to us even with the Buddha’s teaching. When we first encounter the teaching, we receive a powerful intellectual and emotional stimulation; but gradually the impetus tends to lose its original freshness and impelling force. The remedy is to constantly renew it by turning to the fullness of life around us, which illustrates the Four Noble Truths in ever new variations. A direct vision will impart new lifeblood even to the most common experiences of every day, so that their true nature appears through the dim haze of habit and speaks to us with a fresh voice. It may well be just the long accustomed sight of the beggar at the street comer, or a weeping child, or the illness of a friend, which startles us afresh, makes us think, and stirs our sense of urgency in treading resolutely the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

We know the beautiful account of how Prince Siddhattha first came face to face with old age, illness and death while driving his chariot through the royal city after a long period of isolation in a make-believe world. This ancient story may well be historical fact, for we know that in the lives of many great men common events often gain a symbolic significance and lead to major consequences far beyond their ordinary appearance. Great minds find significance in the seemingly commonplace and invest the fleeting moment with far-reaching efficacy. But, without contesting the inner truth of that old story, we may reasonably believe that the young prince had actually seen before, with his fleshly eyes, old people, sick people, and those who had succumbed to death. However, on these earlier occasions, he would not have been touched very deeply by these sights – as is the case with most of us most of the time. That earlier lack of sensitivity may have been due to the carefully protected, artificial seclusion of his petty, though princely, happiness, the hereditary routine of his life into which his father had placed him. Only when he broke through that golden cage of easy-going habits could the facts of suffering strike him as forcibly as if he had seen them for the first time. Then only was he stirred by them to a sense of urgency that led him out of the home life and set his feet firmly on the road to enlightenment.

The more *clearly and deeply* our minds and hearts respond to the truth of suffering manifest in the very common facts of our existence, the less often shall we need a repetition of the lesson and the shorter will be our migration through samsara. The clarity of perception evoking our response will come from an undetected directness of vision, bestowed by bare attention *(sati);* and the *depth* of experience will come from wise reflection or clear comprehension *(sampajanna)*.

Directness of vision is also a chief characteristic of the methodical practice of insight meditation. There it is identified with the direct or experiential knowledge bestowed by meditation, as distinguished from the inferential knowledge obtained by study and reflection. In the meditative development of insight, one's own physical and mental processes are directly viewed, without the interference of abstract concepts or the filtering screens of emotional evaluation. For in this context these only obscure or camouflage the naked facts, detracting from the strong immediate impact of reality. Conceptual generalizations from experience are very useful in their place; but if they interrupt the meditative practice of bare attention, they tend to "shove aside" or dispose of the particular fact, by saying, as it were: "It is nothing else but this. "Generalizing thought inclines to become impatient with a recurrent type, and after having it classified, soon finds it boring.

Bare attention, however, being the key instrument of methodical insight, keeps to the particular. It follows keenly the rise and fall of successive physical and mental processes. Though all phenomena of a given series may be true to type (e.g., inhalations and exhalations), bare attention regards each of them as distinct, and conscientiously registers its separate birth and death. If mindfulness remains alert, these repetitions of type will, by their multiplication, exert not a reduced but an intensified impact on the mind. The three characteristics – impermanence, suffering, and voidness of self – inherent in the process observed, will stand out more and more clearly. They will appear in the light shed by the phenomena themselves, not in a *borrowed* light, not even a light borrowed from the Buddha, the peerless and indispensable guide to these experiences.

These physical and mental phenomena, in their "self-luminosity," will then convey a growing sense of urgency to the meditator: revulsion, dissatisfaction, awareness of danger, followed by detachment – though certainly, joy, happiness, and calm, too, will not be absent throughout the practice. Then, if all other conditions of inner maturity are fulfilled, the first direct vision of final liberation will dawn with the streamwinner's *(sotapanna)* indubitable knowledge: "Whatever has the nature of arising, has the nature of vanishing."

Thus, in the unfoldment of the power of mindfulness, Satipaṭṭhāna will prove itself as the true embodiment of the Dhamma, of which it was said:

> *"Well-proclaimed is the Dhamma by the Blessed One, visible here and now, not delayed, inviting inspection, onward-leading, to be directly experienced by the wise."*

Mindfulness

The Path to the Deathless

by Ajahn Sumedho

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Mindfulness is the path to the deathless
Heedlessness is the path to death.
The mindful do not die;
But the heedless are as if dead already.

Dhammapada 21

MINDFULNESS:

THE PATH TO THE DEATHLESS

THE MEDITATION TEACHING OF
VENERABLE AJAHN SUMEDHO

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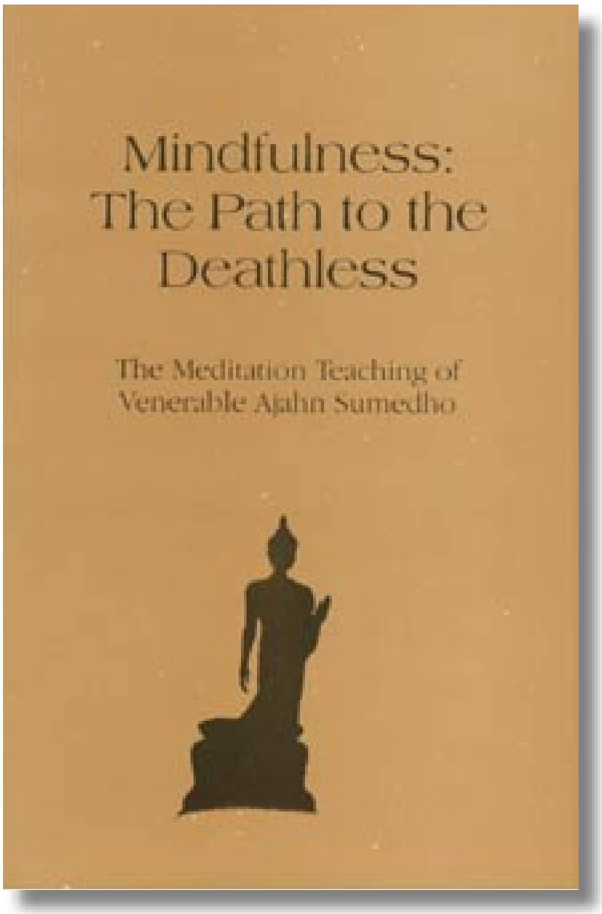
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The Meditation Teaching of Venerable Ajahn Sumedho

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Introduction

The aim of this book is to provide a clear instruction in and reflection on Buddhist meditation as taught by Ajahn Sumedho, a bhikkhu (monk) of the Theravadin tradition. The following chapters are edited from longer talks Ajahn Sumedho has given to meditators as a practical approach to the wisdom of Buddhism. This wisdom is otherwise known as Dhamma, or 'the way things are'.

You are invited to use this book as a step-by-step manual. The first chapter tries to make the practice of meditation clear in a general way and the subsequent sections can be taken one at a time and followed by a period of meditation. The third chapter is a reflection on the understanding that meditation develops. The book concludes with the means of taking the Refuges and Precepts which place the practice of meditation within the larger framework of mind-cultivation. These can be requested formally from ordained Buddhists (Saṅgha) or personally determined. They form the foundation of the means whereby spiritual values are brought into the world.

The first edition of this book (2,000 copies) was printed in 1985 — for the opening of the Amaravati Buddhist Centre — and stocks were quickly exhausted. People appreciated the book, and some asked to help sponsor a re-print; so we gave the manuscript a more thorough proof-reading than had been possible before, and added some design to improve the 'feel' of the book — otherwise the text is the same.. As this book is entirely produced by voluntary contributions and acts of service to the Dhamma, readers are asked to respect this offering and make it freely available.

May all beings realise Truth.

Venerable Sucitto
Amaravati Buddhist Centre
May 1986

A note before you begin

Most of these instructions can be carried out whether sitting, standing or walking. However, the technique of mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati) mentioned in the first few chapters is generally used with a sitting posture as it is improved by a still and settled physical state. For this state the emphasis is on sitting in such a way that the spine is erect, but not stressed, with the neck in line with the spine and the head balanced so that it does not droop forward. Many people find the crosslegged 'lotus' posture (sitting on a cushion or mat with one or both feet placed sole upward on the opposite thigh) an ideal balance of effort and stability — after a few months of practice it is good to train oneself towards this, gently, a little at a time. A straight-backed chair can be used if this posture is too difficult.

Having attained some physical balance and stability, the arms and face should be relaxed, with the hands resting, one in the palm of the other, in the lap. Allow the eyelids to close, relax the mind… take up the meditation object.

'Jongrom' (a Thai word derived from ***caṅkama*** from Pāli, the scriptural language) means pacing to and fro on a straight path. The path should be measured — ideally twenty to thirty paces — between two clearly recognisable objects, so that one is not having to count the steps. The hands should be lightly clasped in front of or behind the body with the arms relaxed. The gaze should be directed in an unfocussed way on the path about ten paces ahead — not to observe anything, but to maintain the most comfortable angle for the neck. The walking then begins in a composed manner, and when one reaches the end of the path, one stands still for the period of a breath or two, mindfully turns around, and mindfully walks back again.

Investigation

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

The word meditation is a much used word these days, covering a wide range of practices. In Buddhism it designates two kinds of meditation — one is called 'samatha', the other 'vipassanā': Samatha meditation is one of concentrating the mind on an object, rather than letting it wander off to other things. One chooses an object such as the sensation of breathing, and puts full attention on the sensations of the inhalation and exhalation. Eventually through this practice you begin to experience a calm mind — and you become tranquil because you are cutting off all other impingements that come through the senses.

The objects that you use for tranquillity are tranquillising (needless to say!). If you want to have an excited mind, then go to something that is exciting, don't go to a Buddhist monastery, go to a disco!… Excitement is easy to concentrate on, isn't it? It's so strong a vibration that it just pulls you right into it. You go to the cinema and if it is really an exciting film, you become enthralled by it. You don't have to exert any effort to watch something that is very exciting or romantic or adventurous. But if you are not used to it, watching a tranquillising object can be terribly boring. What is more boring than watching your breath if you are used to more exciting things? So for this kind of ability, you have to arouse effort from your mind, because the breath is not interesting, not romantic, not adventurous or scintillating — it is just as it is. So you have to arouse effort because you're not getting stimulated from outside.

In this meditation, you are not trying to create any image, but just to concentrate on the ordinary feeling of your body as it is right now: to sustain and hold your attention on your breathing. When you do that, the breath becomes more and more refined, and you calm down… I know people who have prescribed samatha meditation for high blood pressure because it calms the heart.

So this is tranquillity practice. You can choose different objects to concentrate on, training yourself to sustain your attention till you absorb or become one with the object. You actually feel a sense of oneness with the object you have been concentrating on, and this is what we call absorption.

The other practice is 'vipassanā', or 'insight meditation.' With insight meditation you are opening the mind up to everything. You are not choosing any particular object to concentrate on or absorb into, but watching in order to understand the way things are. Now what we can see about the way things are, is that all sensory experience is impermanent. Everything you see, hear, smell, taste, touch; all mental conditions — your feelings, memories and thoughts — are changing conditions of the mind, which arise and pass away. In vipassanā, we take this characteristic of impermanence (or change) as a way of looking at all sensory experience that we can observe while sitting here.

This is not just a philosophical attitude or a belief in a particular Buddhist theory: impermanence is to be insightfully known by opening the mind to watch, and being aware of the way things are. It's not a matter of analysing things by assuming that things should be a certain way and, when they aren't, then trying to figure out why things are not the way we think they should be. With insight practice, we are not trying to analyse ourselves or even trying to change anything to fit our desires. In this practice we just patiently observe that whatever arises passes away, whether it is mental or physical.

So this includes the sense organs themselves, the object of the senses, and the consciousness that arises with their contact. There are also mental conditions of liking or disliking what we see, smell, taste, feel or touch; the names we give them; and the ideas, words and concepts we create around sensory experience. Much of our life is based on wrong assumptions made through not understanding and not really investigating the way anything is. So life for one who isn't awake and aware tends to become depressing or bewildering, especially when disappointments or tragedies occur. Then one becomes overwhelmed because one has not observed the way things are.

In Buddhist terms we use the word Dhamma, or Dharma, which means 'the way it is', 'the natural laws'. When we observe and 'practise the Dhamma', we open our mind to the way things are. In this way we are no longer blindly reacting to the sensory experience, but understanding it, and through that comprehension beginning to let go of it. We begin to free ourselves from just being overwhelmed or blinded and deluded by the appearance of things. Now to be aware and awake is not a matter of *becoming* that way, but of *being* that way. So we observe the way it is right now, rather than doing something now to become aware in the future. We observe the body as it is, sitting here. It all belongs to nature, doesn't it? The human body belongs to the earth, it needs to be sustained by the things that come out of the earth. You cannot live on just air or try to import food from Mars and Venus. You have to eat the things that live and grow on this Earth. When the body dies, it goes back to the earth, it rots and decays and becomes one with the earth again. It follows the laws of nature, of creation and destruction, of being born and then dying. Anything that is born doesn't stay permanently in one state, it grows up, gets old and then dies. All things in nature, even the universe itself, have their spans of existence, birth and death, beginning and ending. All that we perceive and can conceive of is change; it is impermanent. So it can never permanently satisfy you.

In Dhamma practice, we also observe this unsatisfactoriness of sensory experience. Now just note in your own life that when you expect to be satisfied from sensory objects or experiences you can only be temporarily satisfied, gratified maybe, momentarily happy — and then it changes. This is because there is no point in sensory consciousness that has a permanent quality or essence. So the sense experience is always a changing one, and out of ignorance and not understanding, we tend to expect a lot from it. We tend to demand, hope and create all kinds of things, only to feel terribly disappointed, despairing, sorrowful and frightened. Those very expectations and hopes take us to despair, anguish, sorrow and grief, lamentation, old age, sickness and death.

Now this is a way of examining sensory consciousness. The mind can think in abstractions, it can create all kinds of ideas and images, it can make things very refined or very coarse. There is a whole gamut of possibilities from very refined states of blissful happiness and ecstasies to very coarse painful miseries: from Heaven to Hell, using more picturesque terminology. But there is no permanent Hell and no permanent Heaven, in fact no permanent state that can be perceived or conceived of. In our meditation, once we begin to realise the limitations, the unsatisfactoriness, the changing nature of all sensory experience, we also begin to realise it is not me or mine, it is 'anattā', not self.

So, realising this, we begin to free ourselves from identification with the sensory conditions. Now this is done not through aversion to them, but through understanding them as they are. It is a truth to be realised, not a belief. ‘Anattā’ is not a Buddhist belief but an actual realisation. Now if you don’t spend any time in your life trying to investigate and understand it, you will probably live your whole life on the assumption that you are your body. Even though you might at some moment think, “Oh, I am not the body”, you read some kind of inspired poetry or some new philosophical angle. You might think it is a good idea that one isn’t the body, but you haven’t really *realised* that. Even though some people, intellectuals and so forth, will say, “We are not the body, the body is not self”, that is easy to say, but to really *know* that is something else. Through this practice of meditation, through the investigation and understanding of the way things are, we begin to free ourselves from attachment. When we no longer expect or demand, then of course we don’t feel the resulting despair and sorrow and grief when we don’t get what we want. So this is the goal — ‘Nibbāna, or realisation of non-grasping of any phenomena that have a beginning and an ending. When we let go of this insidious and habitual attachment to what is born and dies, we begin to realise the Deathless.

Some people just live their lives reacting to life because they have been conditioned to do so, like Pavlovian dogs. If you are not awakened to the way things are, then you really are merely a conditioned intelligent creature rather than a conditioned stupid dog. You may look down on Pavlov’s dogs that salivate when the bell rings, but notice how we do very similar things. This is because with sensory experience it is all conditioning, it is not a person, it is no ‘soul’ or ‘personal essence’. These bodies, feelings, memories and thoughts are perceptions conditioned into the mind through pain, through having been born as a human being, being born into the families we have, and the class, race, nationality; dependent on whether we have a male or female body, attractive or unattractive, and so forth. All these are just the conditions that are not ours, not me, not mine. These conditions, they follow the laws of nature, the natural laws. We cannot say, “ I don’t want my body to get old” -well, we can say that, but no matter how insistent we are, the body still gets old. We cannot expect the body to never feel pain or get ill or always have perfect vision and hearing. We hope, don’t we? “I hope I will always be healthy, I will never become an invalid and I will always have good eyesight, never become blind; have good ears so I will never be one of those old people that others have to yell at; and that I will never get senile and always have control of my faculties ‘til I die at ninety-five, fully alert, bright, cheerful, and die just in my sleep without any pain.” That is how we would all like it. Some of us might hold up for a long time and die in an idyllic way, tomorrow all our eyeballs might fall out. It is unlikely, but it could happen! However, the burden of life diminishes considerably when we reflect on the limitations of our life. Then we know what we can achieve, what we can learn from life. So much human misery comes out of expecting a lot and never quite being able to get everything one has hoped for.

So in our meditation and insightful understanding of the way things are, we see that beauty, refinement, pleasure are impermanent conditions — as well as pain, misery and ugliness. If you really understand that, then you can enjoy and endure whatever happens to you. Actually, much of the lesson in life is learning to endure what we don’t like in ourselves and in the world around us; being able to be patient and kindly, and not make a scene over the imperfections in the sensory experience. We can adapt and endure and accept the changing characteristics of the sensory birth and death cycle by letting go and no longer attaching to it. When we free ourselves from identity with it, we experience our true nature, which is bright, clear, knowing; but is not a personal thing anymore, it is not ’me’ or ‘mine’ — there is no attainment or attachment to it. We can only attach to that which is not ourself!

The Buddha’s teachings are merely helpful means, ways of looking at sensory experience that help us to understand it. They are not commandments, they are not religious dogmas that we have to accept or believe in. They are merely guides to point to the way things are. So we are not using the Buddha’s teachings to grasp them as an end in themselves, but only to remind ourselves to be awake, alert and aware that all that arises passes away.

This is a continuous, constant observation and reflection on the sensory world, because the sensory world has a powerfully strong influence. Having a body like this with the society we live in, the pressures on all of us are fantastic. Everything moves so quickly — television and the technology of the age, the cars — everything tends to move at a very fast pace. It is all very attractive, exciting and interesting, and it all pulls your senses out. Just notice when you go to London how all the advertisements pull your attention out to whiskey bottles and cigarettes! Your attention is pulled into things you can buy, always going towards rebirth into sensory experience. The materialistic society tries to arouse greed so you will spend your money, and yet never be contented with what you have. There is always something better, something newer, something more delicious than what was the most delicious yesterday… it goes on and on and on, pulling you out into objects of the senses like that.

But when we come into the shrine room, we are not here to look at each other or to be attracted or pulled into any of the objects in the room, but to use them for reminding ourselves. We are reminded to either concentrate our minds on a peaceful object, or open the mind, investigate and reflect on the way things are. We have to experience this, each one for ourselves. No-one's enlightenment is going to enlighten any of the rest of us. So this is a movement inwards: not looking outwards for somebody who is enlightened to make you enlightened. We give this opportunity for encouragement and guidance so that those of you who are interested in doing this can do so. Here you can, most of the time, be sure that nobody is going to snatch your purse! These days you can't count on anything, but there is less risk of it here than if you were sitting in Piccadilly Circus; Buddhist monasteries are refuges for this kind of opening of the mind. This is our opportunity as human beings.

As a human being we have a mind that can reflect and observe. You can observe whether you are happy or miserable. You can observe the anger or jealousy or confusion in your mind. When you are sitting and feel really confused and upset, there is that in you which knows it. You might hate it and just blindly react to it, but if you are more patient you can observe that this is a temporary changing condition of confusion or anger or greed. But an animal cannot do that; when it is angry it is completely that, lost in it. Tell an angry cat to watch its anger! I have never been able to get anywhere with our cat, she cannot reflect on greed. But *I* can, and I am sure that the rest of you can. I see delicious food in front of me, and the movement in the mind is the same as our cat Doris's. But we can observe the animal attraction to things that smell good and look good.

This is using wisdom by watching that impulse, and understanding it. That which observes greed is not greed: greed cannot observe itself, but that which is not greed can observe it. This observing is what we call 'Buddha' or 'Buddha wisdom' — awareness of the way things are.

Instruction

WATCHING THE BREATH (ĀNĀPĀNASATI)

Ānāpānasati* is a way of concentrating your mind on your breath, so whether you are an expert at it already or whether you have given it up as a lost cause, there is always a time to watch the breath. This is an opportunity for developing 'samādhi' (concentration) through mustering all your attention just on the sensation of breathing. So at this time use your full commitment to that one point for the length of an inhalation, and the length of an exhalation. You are not trying to do it for, say, fifteen minutes, because you would never succeed at that, if that were your designated span of time for one-pointed concentration. So use this span of an inhalation and an exhalation.

Now the success of this depends on your patience rather than on your will-power, because the mind does wander and we always have to patiently go back to the breath. When we're aware that the mind wanders off, we note what it is: it may be because we tend to just put in a lot of energy at first and then not sustain it, making too much effort without sustaining power. So we are using the length of an inhalation and the length of an exhalation in order to limit the effort to just this length of time within which to sustain attention. Put forth effort at the beginning of the exhalation to sustain it through that, through the exhalation to the end, and then again with the inhalation. Eventually it becomes even, and one is said to have 'samādhi' when it seems effortless.

At first it seems like a lot of effort, or that we can't do it, because we aren't used to doing this. Most minds have been trained to use associative thought. The mind has been trained by reading books and the like, to go from one word to the next, to have thoughts and concepts based on logic and reason. However, ānāpānasati is a different kind of training, where the object that we're concentrating on is so simple that it's not at all interesting on the intellectual level. So it's not a matter of being interested in it, but of putting forth effort and using this natural function of the body as a point of concentration. The body breathes whether one is aware of it or not. It's not like pranayama, where we're developing power through the breath, but rather developing samādhi — concentration — and mindfulness through observing the breath, the normal breath, as it is right now. As with anything, this is something that we have to practise to be able to do; nobody has any problem understanding the theory, it's in the continuous practice of it that people feel discouraged.

***Ānāpānasati**: literally, 'mindfulness' (sati) of the in and out breath.

But note that very discouragement that comes from not being able to get the result that you want, because that's the hindrance to the practice. Note that very feeling, recognise that, and then let it go. Go back to the breath again. Be aware of that point where you get fed up or feel aversion or impatience with it, recognise it, then let it go and go back to the breath again.

THE MANTRA 'BUDDHO'

If you've got a really active thinking mind, you may find the mantra* 'Buddho' helpful. Inhale on 'Bud' and exhale on '-dho' so you're

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***mantra**: a word of religious significance, the repetition of which is a meditation device.

actually thinking this for each inhalation. This is a way of sustaining concentration: so for the next fifteen minutes, do the ānāpānasati, putting all your attention, composing your mind with the mantric sound, 'Bud-dho'. Learn to train the mind to that point of clarity and brightness rather than just sinking into passivity. It requires sustained effort: one inhalation of 'Bud' — fully bright and clear in your mind, the thought itself raised and bright from the beginning to the end of the inhalation, and '-dho' on the exhalation. Let everything else go at this time. The occasion has arisen now to do just this — you can solve your problems and the world's problems afterwards. At this time this much is all the occasion calls for. Bring the mantra up into consciousness. Make the mantra fully conscious instead of just a perfunctory passive thing that makes the mind dull; energise the mind so that the inhalation on 'Bud' is a bright inhalation, not just a perfunctory 'Bud' sound that fades out because it never gets brightened or refreshed by your mind. You can visualize the spelling so that you're fully with that syllable for the length of an inhalation, from the beginning to the end. Then '-dho' on the exhalation is performed the same way so that there's a continuity of effort rather than sporadic leaps-and-starts and failures.

Just notice if you have any obsessive thoughts that are coming up — some silly phrase that might be going through your mind. Now if you just sink into a passive state, then obsessive thoughts will take over. But learning to understand how the mind works and how to use it skilfully, you're taking this particular thought, the concept of 'Buddho' (the Buddha, the One Who Knows), and you're holding it in the mind as a thought. Not just as an obsessive, habitual thought, but as a skilful use of thought, using it to sustain concentration for the length of one inhalation, exhalation, for fifteen minutes.

The practice is that, no matter how many times you fail and your mind starts wandering, you simply note that you're distracted, or that you're thinking about it, or you'd rather not bother with 'Buddho' — "I don't want to do that. I'd rather just sit here and relax and not have to put forth any effort. Don't feel like doing it." Or maybe you've got other things on your mind at this time, creeping in at the edges of consciousness — so you note that. Note what mood there is in your mind right now — not to be critical or discouraged, but just calmly, coolly notice, if you're calmed by it, or if you feel dull or sleepy; if you've been thinking all this time or if you've been concentrating. Just to know.

The obstacle to concentration practice is aversion to failure and the incredible desire to succeed. Practice is not a matter of willpower, but of wisdom, of noting wisdom. With this practice, you can learn where your weaknesses are, where you tend to get lost. You witness the kind of character traits you've developed in your life so far, not to be critical of them but just to know how to work with them and not be enslaved by them. This means a careful, wise reflection on the way things are. So rather than avoiding them at all costs, even the ugliest messes are observed and recognised. That's an enduring quality. Nibbāna* is often described as being 'cool'. Sounds like hip talk, doesn't it? But there's a certain significance to that word. Coolness to what? It tends to be refreshing, not caught up in passions but detached, alert and balanced.

The word 'Buddho' is a word that you can develop in your life as something to fill the mind with rather than with worries and all kinds of unskilful habits. Take the word, look at it, listen to it: 'Buddho'! It means the one who knows, the Buddha, the awakened, that which is awake. You can visualise it in your mind. Listen to what your mind says — blah, blah, blah, etc. It goes on like this, an endless kind of excrement of repressed fears and aversions. So, now, we are recognising that. We're not using 'Buddho' as a club to annihilate or repress things, but as a skilful means. We can use the finest tools for killing and for harming others, can't we? You can take the most beautiful Buddha rūpa and bash somebody over the head with it if you want! That's not what we call 'Buddhanussati', Reflection on the Buddha, is it? But we might do that with the word 'Buddho' as a way of suppressing those thoughts or feelings. That's an unskilful use of it. Remember we're not here to annihilate but to allow things to fade out. This is a gentle practice of patiently imposing 'Buddho' over the thinking, not out of exasperation, but in a firm and deliberate way.

***Nibbāna**: Peace through non-attachment, otherwise spelt 'Nirvāṇa.

The world needs to learn how to do this, doesn't it? — the U.S. and the Soviet Union — rather than taking machine guns and nuclear weapons and annihilating things that get in the way; or saying awful nasty things to each other. Even in our lives we do that, don't we? How many of you have said nasty things to someone else recently, wounding things, unkind barbed criticism, just because they annoy you, get in your way, or frighten you? So we practise just this with the little nasty annoying things in our own mind, the things which are foolish and stupid. We use 'Buddho', not as a club but as a skilful means of allowing it to go, to let go of it. Now for the next fifteen minutes, go back to your noses, with the mantra 'Buddho'. See how to use it and work with it.

EFFORT AND RELAXATION

Effort is simply doing what you have to do. It varies according to people's characters and habits. Some people have a lot of energy — so much so that they are always on the go, looking for things to do. You see them trying to find things to do. all the time, putting everything into the external. In meditation, we're not seeking anything to do, as an escape, but we are developing the internal kind of effort. We observe the mind, and concentrate on the subject.

If you make too much effort, you just become restless and if you don't put enough effort in, you become dull and the body begins to slump. Your body is a good measure of effort: you make the body straight, you can fill the body with effort; align the body, pull up your chest, keep your spine straight. It takes a lot of willpower so your body is a good thing to watch for effort. If you're slack you just find the easiest posture — the force of gravity pulls you down. When the weather is cold, you have to put energy up through the spine so that you're filling your body out, rather than huddling under blankets.

With ānāpānasati, 'mindfulness of breathing', you are concentrating on the rhythm. I found it most helpful for learning to slow down rather than doing everything quickly — like thinking — you're concentrating on a rhythm that is much slower than your thoughts. But ānāpānasati requires you to slow down, it has a gentle rhythm to it. So we stop thinking: we are content with one inhalation, one exhalation — taking all the time in the world, just to be with one inhalation, from the beginning to the middle and end.

If you're trying to get samādhi (concentration) from ānāpānasati, then you have already set a goal for yourself — you're doing this in order to get something for yourself, so ānāpānasati becomes a very frustrating experience, you become angry with it. Can you stay with just one inhalation? To be content with just one exhalation? To be content with just the simple little span you have to slow down, don't you?

When you're aiming to get jhāna (absorption) from this meditation and you're really putting a lot of effort into it, you are not slowing down, you're trying to get something out of it, trying to achieve and attain rather than humbly being content with one breath. The success of ānāpānasati is just that much — mindful for the length of one inhalation, for the length of one exhalation. Establish your attention at the beginning and the end — or beginning, middle and end. This gives you some definite points for reflection, so that if your mind wanders a lot during the practice, you pay special attention, scrutinising the beginning, the middle and the end. If you don't do this, then the mind will tend to wander.

All our effort goes into just that; everything else is suppressed during that time, or discarded. Reflect on the difference between inhalation and exhalation — examine it. Which do you like best? Sometimes the breathing will seem to disappear; it becomes very fine. The body seems to be breathing by itself and you get this strange feeling that you're not going to breathe. It's a bit frightening.

But this is an exercise; you centre on the breathing, without trying to control it at all. Sometimes when you are concentrating on the nostrils, you feel that the whole body is breathing. The body keeps breathing, all on its own.

Sometimes we get too serious about everything — totally lacking in joy and happiness, no sense of humour; we just repress everything. So gladden the mind, be relaxed and at ease, taking all the time in the world, without the pressure of having to achieve anything important: nothing special, nothing to attain, no big deal. It's just a little thing; even when you have only one mindful inhalation during the morning, that is better than what most people are doing — surely it is better than being heedless the whole time.

If you're a really negative person then try to be someone who is kinder and more self-accepting. Just relax and don't make meditation into a burdensome task for yourself. See it as an opportunity to be peaceful and at ease with the moment. Relax your body and be at peace.

You're not battling with the forces of evil. If you feel averse towards ānāpānasati, then note that, too. Don't feel that it is something you *have* to do, but see it as a pleasure, as something you really enjoy doing. You don't have to do anything else, you can just be completely relaxed. You've got all you need, you've got your breathing, you just have to sit here, there is nothing difficult to do, you need no special abilities, you don't even need to be particularly intelligent. When you think, "I can't do it," then just recognise that as resistance, fear or frustration and then relax.

If you find yourself getting all tense and up-tight about ānāpānasati, then stop doing it. Don't make it into a difficult thing, don't make it into a burdensome task. If you can't do it, then just sit. When I used to get in terrible states, then I would just contemplate 'peace' I would start to think, "I've got to… I've got to… I've got to do this." Then I'd think, "Just be at peace, relax."

Doubts and restlessness, discontent, aversion — soon I was able to reflect on peace, saying the word over and over, hypnotising myself, "Relax, relax." The self doubts would start coming, "I'm getting nowhere with this, it's useless, I want to get something." Soon I was able to be peaceful with that. You can calm down and when you relax, you can do ānāpānasati. If you want something to do, then do that.

At first, the practice can get very boring; you feel hopelessly clumsy like when you are learning to play the guitar. When you first start playing, your fingers are so clumsy, it seems hopeless, but once you have done so for some time, you gain skill and it's quite easy. You're learning to witness to what is going on in your mind, so you can know when you're getting restless and tense, averse to everything you recognise that, you're not trying to convince yourself that it is otherwise. You're fully aware of the way things are: what do you do when you're up-tight, tense and nervous? You relax.

In my first years with Ajahn Chah, I used to be very serious about meditation sometimes, I really got much too grim and solemn about myself. I would lose all sense of humour and just get DEAD SERIOUS, all dried up like an old twig. I would put forth a lot of effort, but it would be so strung up and unpleasant, thinking, "I've got to… I'm too lazy." I felt such terrible guilt if I wasn't meditating all the time — a grim, joyless state of mind. So I watched that, meditating on myself as a dried stick. When the whole thing was totally unpleasant, I would just remember the opposites, "You don't have to do anything. Nowhere to go, nothing to do. Be peaceful with the way things are now, relax, let go." I'd use that.

When your mind gets into this condition, apply the opposite, learn to take things easy. You read books about not putting any effort into things — "just let it happen in a natural way" — and you think, "All I have to do is lounge about." Then you usually lapse into a dull, passive state. But that is the time when you need to put forth a bit more effort.

With ānāpānasati, you can sustain effort for one inhalation. And if you can't sustain it for one inhalation, then do it for half an inhalation at least. In this way, you're not trying to become perfect all at once. You don't have to do everything just right, because of some idea of how it could be, but you work with the kind of problems as they are. But if you have a scattered mind, then it is wisdom to recognise the mind that goes all over the place — that's insight. To think that you shouldn't be that way, to hate yourself or feel discouraged because that is the way you happen to be — that's ignorance.

With ānāpānasati, you recognise the way it is now and you start from there: you sustain your attention a little longer and you begin to understand what concentration is, making resolutions that you can keep. Don't make Superman resolutions when you're not Superman. Do ānāpānasati, for ten or fifteen minutes rather than thinking you can do it the whole night, "I'm going to do ānāpānasati from now until dawn." Then you fail and become angry. You set periods that you know you can do. Experiment, work with the mind until you understand how to put forth effort, how to relax.

Ānāpānasati is something immediate. It takes you to insight — vipassanā. The impermanent nature of the breath is not yours, is it? Having been born, the body breathes all on its own. In and out breaths — the one conditions the other. As long as the body is alive, that is the way it will be. You don't control anything, breathing belongs to nature, it doesn't belong to you, it is not-self. When you observe this, you are doing vipassanā, insight. It's not something exciting or fascinating or unpleasant. It's natural.

WALKING MINDFULLY (JONGROM)

Walking 'Jongrom'* is a practice of concentrated walking whereby you're with the movement of your feet. You bring your attention to the walking of the body from the beginning of the path to the end, turning around, and the body standing. Then there arises the intention to walk, and then the walking. Note the middle of

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*__Jongrom__ (a Thai word): pacing to and fro on a straight path. *See page 7*.

the path and the end, stopping, turning, standing: the points for composing the mind when the mind starts wandering everywhichway. You can plan a revolution or something while walking jongrom if you're not careful! How many revolutions have been plotted during jongrom walking…? So, rather than doing things like that, we use this time to concentrate on what's actually going on. These aren't fantastic sensations, they're so ordinary that we don't really notice them. Now notice that it takes an effort to really be aware of things like that.

Now when the mind wanders and you find yourself off in India while you're in the middle of the jongrom path, then recognise"Oh!" You're awakened at that moment. You're awake, so then re-establish your mind on what's actually happening, with the body walking from this place to that. It's a training in patience because the mind wanders all over the place. If in the past you've had blissful moments of walking meditation and you think, "On the last retreat I did walking jongrom and I really felt just the body walking. I felt that there was no self and it was blissful, oh, if I can't do that again…." Note that desire to attain something according to a memory of some previous happy time. Note that as a condition; that's an obstacle. Give it all up, it doesn't matter whether a moment of bliss comes out of it. Just one step and the next step — that's all there is to it, a letting go, a being content with very little, rather than trying to attain some blissful state that you might have had at some time while doing this meditation. The more you try, the more miserable your mind becomes, because you're following the desire to have some lovely experience according to a memory. Be content with the way it is now, whatever it is. Be peaceful with the way it is at this moment, rather than rushing around trying to do something now to get some state that you want.

One step at a time — notice how peaceful walking meditation is when all you have to do is be with one step. But if you think you've got to develop samādhi from this walking practice, and your mind goes all over the place, what happens? "I can't stand this walking meditation, get no peace out of it, I've been practising trying get this feeling of walking without anybody walking and my mind just wanders everywhere" — because you don't understand how to do it yet, your mind is idealizing, trying to *get* something, rather than just *being*. When you're walking, all you have to do is walk. One step, next step — simple…. But it is not easy, is it? The mind is carried away, trying to figure out what you should be doing, what's wrong with you and why you can't do it.

But in the monastery what we do is to get up in the morning, do the chanting, meditate, sit, clean the monastery, do the cooking, sit, stand, walk, work; whatever, just take it as it comes, one thing at a time. So, being with the way things are is non-attachment, that brings peacefulness and ease. Life changes and we can watch it change, we can adapt to the changingness of the sensory world, whatever it is. Whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, we can always endure and cope with life, no matter what happens to us. If we realise the truth, we realise inner peacefulness.

KINDNESS (METTĀ)

In English the word 'love' often refers to 'something that I like' For example,"I love sticky rice," "I love sweet mango." We really mean we like it. Liking is being attached to something such as food which we really like or enjoy eating. We don't love it. Mettā means you love your enemy; it doesn't mean you like your enemy. If somebody wants to kill you and you say, "I like them," that is silly! But we can love them, meaning that we can refrain from unpleasant thoughts and vindictiveness, from any desire to hurt them or annihilate them. Even though you might not like them — they are miserable, wretched people — you can still be kind, generous and charitable towards them. If some drunk came into this room who was foul and disgusting, ugly and diseased, and there was nothing one could be attracted to in him — to say, "I like this man" would be ridiculous. But one could love him, not dwell in aversion, not be caught up in reactions to his unpleasantness. That's what we mean by mettā.

Sometimes there are things one doesn't like about oneself, but mettā means not being caught up in the thoughts we have, the attitudes, the problems, the thoughts and feelings of the mind. So it becomes an immediate practice of being very mindful. To be mindful means to have mettā towards the fear in your mind, or the anger, or the jealousy. Mettā means not creating problems around existing conditions, allowing them to fade away, to cease. For example, when fear comes up in your mind, you can have mettā for the fear — meaning that you don't build up aversion to it, you can just accept its presence and allow it to cease. You can also minimise the fear by recognising that it is the same kind of fear that everyone has, that animals have. It's not my fear, it's not a person's, it's an impersonal fear. We begin to have compassion for other beings when we understand the suffering involved in reacting to fear in our own lives — the pain, the physical pain of being kicked, when somebody kicks you. That kind of pain is exactly the same kind of pain that a dog feels when he's being kicked, so you can have mettā for the pain, meaning a kindness and a patience of not dwelling in aversion. We can work with mettā internally, with all our emotional problems: you think, "I want to get rid of it, it's terrible." That's a lack of mettā for yourself, isn't it? Recognise the desire-to-get-rid-of! Don't dwell in aversion on existing emotional conditions. You don't have to pretend to feel approval towards your faults. You don't think, "I like my faults." Some people are foolish enough to say, "My faults make me interesting. I'm a fascinating personality because of my weaknesses." Mettā is not conditioning yourself to believe that you like something that you don't like at all, it is just not dwelling in aversion. It's easy to feel mettā towards something you like — pretty little children, good looking people, pleasant mannered people, little puppies, beautiful flowers — we can feel mettā for ourselves when we're feeling good. "I am feeling happy with myself now." When things are going well it's easy to feel kind towards that which is good and pretty and beautiful. At this point we can get lost. Mettā isn't just good wishes, lovely sentiments, high-minded thoughts, it's always very practical.

If you're being very idealistic, and you hate someone, then you feel, "I shouldn't hate anyone. Buddhists should have mettā for all living beings. I should love everybody. If I'm a good Buddhist then I should like everybody." All that comes from impractical idealism. Have mettā for the aversion you feel, for the pettiness of the mind, the jealousy, envy — meaning peacefully co-existing, not creating problems, not making it difficult nor creating problems out df the difficulties that arise in life, within our minds and bodies.

In London, I used to get very upset when travelling on the underground. I used to hate it, those horrible underground stations with ghastly advertising posters and great crowds of people on those dingy, grotty trains which roar along the tunnels. I used to feel a total lack of mettā (patient-kindness). I used to dwell in aversion on it, then I decided to make my practice a patient-kindness meditation while travelling on the London Underground. Then I began to really enjoy it, rather than dwelling in resentment.

I began to feel kindly towards the people there. The aversion and the complaining all disappeared — totally.

When you feel aversion towards somebody, you can notice the tendency to start adding to it, "He did this and he did that, and he's this way and he shouldn't be that way." Then when you really like somebody, "He can do this and he can do that. He's good and kind." But if someone says, "That person's really bad!" you feel angry. If you hate somebody and someone else praises him, you also feel angry. You don't want to hear how good your enemy is. When you are full of anger, you can't imagine that someone you hate may have some virtuous qualities; even if they do have some good qualities, you can never remember any of them. You can only remember all the bad things. When you like somebody, even his faults can be endearing — 'harmless little faults'.

So recognise this in your own experience; observe the force of like and dislike. Patient-kindness, mettā, is a very useful and effective instrument for dealing with all the petty trivia which the mind builds up around unpleasant experience. Mettā is also a very useful method for those who have discriminative, very critical minds. They can see only the faults in everything, but they never look at themselves, they only see what's 'out there'.

It is now very common to always be complaining about the weather or the government. Personal arrogance gives rise to these really nasty comments about everything; or you start talking about someone who isn't there, ripping them apart, quite intelligently, and quite objectively. You are so analytical, you know exactly what that person needs, what they should do and what they should not do, and why they're this way and that. Very impressive to have such a sharp, critical mind and know what they ought to do. You are, of course, saying, "Really, I'm much better than they are."

You are not blinding yourself to the faults and flaws in everything. You are just peacefully co-existing with them. You are not demanding that it be otherwise. So mettā sometimes needs to overlook what's wrong with yourself and everyone else — it doesn't mean that you don't notice those things, it means that you don't develop problems around them. You stop that kind of indulgence by being kind and patient — peacefully co-existing.

MINDFULNESS OF THE ORDINARY

Now for the next hour we'll do the walking practice, using the motion of walking as the object of concentration, bringing your attention to the movement of your feet, and the pressure of the feet touching the ground. You can use the mantra 'Buddho' for that also — 'Bud' for the right, '-dho' for the left, using the span of the jongrom path. See if you can be fully with, fully alert to the sensation of walking from the beginning of the jongrom path to the end. Use an ordinary pace, then you can slow it down or speed it up accordingly. Develop a normal pace, because our meditation moves around the ordinary things rather than the special. We use the ordinary breath, not a special 'breathing practice'; the sitting posture rather than standing on our heads; normal walking rather than running, jogging or walking methodically slowly — just a relaxed pace. We're practising around what's most ordinary, because we take it for granted. But now we're bringing our attention to all the things we've taken for granted and never noticed, such as our own minds and bodies. Even doctors trained in physiology and anatomy are not really with their bodies. They sleep with their bodies, they're born with their bodies, they grow old, have to live with them, feed them, exercise them and yet they'll tell you about a liver as if it was on a chart. It's easier to look at a liver on a chart than to be aware of your own liver, isn't it? So we look at the world as if somehow we aren't a part of it and what's most ordinary, what's most common we miss, because we're looking at what's extraordinary.

Television is extraordinary. They can put all kinds of fantastic adventurous romantic things on the television. It's a miraculous thing, so it's easy to concentrate on. You can get mesmerised by the 'telly'. Also, when the body becomes extraordinary, say it becomes very ill, or very painful, or it feels ecstatic or wonderful feelings go through it, we notice that! But just the pressure of the right foot on the ground, just the movement of the breath, just the feeling of your body sitting on the seat when there's not any kind of extreme sensation — those are the things we're awakened to now. We're bringing our attention to the way things are for an ordinary life.

When life becomes extreme, or extraordinary, then we find we can cope with it quite well. Pacifists and conscientious objectors are often asked this famous question, "You don't believe in violence, so what would you do if a maniac was attacking your mother?" That's something that I think most of us have never had to worry about very much! It's not the kind of ordinary daily occurrence in one's life. But if such an extreme situation did arise I'm sure we would do something that would be appropriate. Even the nuttiest person can be mindful in extreme situations. But in ordinary life when there isn't anything extreme going on, when we're just sitting here, we can be completely nutty, can't we? It says in the Pātimokkha* discipline that we monks shouldn't hit anyone So then I sit here worrying about what I would do if a maniac attacks my mother. I've created a great moral problem in an ordinary situation, when I'm sitting here and my mother isn't even here. In all these years there hasn't been the slightest threat to my mother's life from maniacs (from California drivers, yes!). Greal moral questions we can answer easily in accordance with time and place if, now, we're mindful of *this* time and *this* place.

***Pātimokkha**: the code of 227 rules and observances that govern the conduct of Buddhist monks of the Theravadin tradition.

So we're bringing attention to the ordinariness of our human condition; the breathing of the body; the walking from one end of the jongrom path to the other; and to the feelings of pleasure and pain. As we go on in the retreat, we examine absolutely everything watch and know everything as it is. This is our practice of vipassanā — to know things as they are, not according to some theory or some assumption we make about them.

LISTENING TO THOUGHT

In opening the mind, or 'letting go', we bring attention to one point on just watching, or being the silent witness who is aware of what comes and goes. With this vipassanā (insight) meditation, we're using the three characteristics of anicca (change), dukkha (unsatisfactoriness), anattā (not self) to observe mental and physical phenomena. We're freeing the mind from blindly repressing, so if we become obsessed with any trivial thoughts or fears, or doubts, worries or anger, we don't need to analyse it. We don't have to figure out why we have it, but just make it fully conscious.

If you're really frightened of something, consciously be frightened. Don't just back away from it, but notice that tendency to try to get rid of it. Bring up fully what you're frightened of, think it out quite deliberately, and listen to your thinking. This is not to analyse, but just to take fear to its absurd end, where it becomes so ridiculous you can start laughing at it. Listen to desire, the mad "I want this, I want that, I've got to have, I don't know what I'll do if I don't have this, and I want that…." Sometimes the mind can just scream away, "I want this!" — and you can listen to that.

I was reading about confrontations, where you scream at each other and that kind of thing, say all the repressed things in your mind; this is a kind of catharsis, but it lacks wise reflection. It lacks the skill of listening to that screaming as a condition, rather than just as a kind of 'letting oneself go', and saying what one really thinks. It lacks that steadiness of mind, which is willing to endure the most horrible thoughts. In this way, we're not believing that those are personal problems, but instead taking fear and anger, mentally, to an absurd position, to where they're just seen as a natural progression of thoughts. We're deliberately thinking all the things we're afraid of thinking, not just out of blindness, but actually watching and listening to them as conditions of the mind, rather than personal failures or problems.

So, in this practice now, we begin to let things go. You don't have to go round looking for particular things, but when things which you feel obsessed with keep arising, bothering you, and you're trying to get rid of them, then bring them up even more. Deliberately think them out and listen, like you're listening to someone talking on the other side of the fence, some gossipy old fish-wife: "We did this, and we did that, and then we did this and then we did that…" and this old lady just goes rambling on! Now, practise just listening to it here as a voice, rather than judging it, saying, "No, no, I hope that's not me, that's not my true nature," or trying to shut her up and saying, "Oh, you old bag, I wish you'd go away!" We all have that, even I have that tendency. It's just a condition of nature, isn't it? It's not a person. So, this nagging tendency in us — "I work so hard, nobody is ever grateful" — is a condition, not a person. Sometimes when you're grumpy, nobody can do anything right — even when they're doing it right, they're doing it wrong! That's another condition of the mind, it's not a person. The grumpiness, the grumpy state of mind is known as a condition: anicca — it changes; dukkha — it is not satisfactory; anattā — it is not a person. There's the fear of what others will think of you if you come in late: you've overslept, you come in, and then you start worrying about what everyone's thinking of you for coming in late — "They think I'm lazy." Worrying about what others think is a condition of the mind. Or we're always here on time, and somebody else comes in late, and we think, "They always come in late, can't they ever be on time!" That also is another condition of the mind.

I'm bringing this up into full consciousness, these trivial things, which you can just push aside because they are trivial, and one doesn't want to be bothered with the trivialities of life; but when we don't bother, then all that gets repressed, so it becomes a problem. We start feeling anxiety, feeling aversion to ourselves or to other people, or depressed; all this comes from refusing to allow conditions, trivialities, or horrible things to become conscious.

Then there is the doubting state of mind, never quite sure what to do: there's fear and doubt, uncertainty and hesitation. Deliberately bring up that state of never being sure, just to be relaxed with that state of where the mind is when you're not grasping hold of any particular thing. "What should I do, should I stay or should I go, should I do this or should I do that, should I do ānāpānasati or should I do vipassanā?" Look at that. Ask yourself questions that can't be answered, like "Who am I?" Notice that empty space before you start thinking it — "who?" — just be alert, just close your eyes, and just before you think "who", just look, the mind's quite empty, isn't it? Then, "Who-am-I?", and then the space after the question mark. That thought comes and goes out of emptiness, doesn't it? When you're just caught in habitual thinking, you can't see the arising of thought, can you? You can't see, you can only catch thought after you realise you've been thinking; so start deliberately thinking, and catch the beginning of a thought, before you actually think it. You take deliberate thoughts like, "Who is the Buddha?" Deliberately think that, so that you see the beginning, the forming of a thought, and the end of it, and the space around it. You're looking at thought and concept in a perspective, rather than just reacting to them.

Say you're angry with somebody. You think, "That's what he said, he said that and he said this and then he did this and he didn't do that right, and he did that all wrong, he's so selfish… and then I remember what he did to so-and-so, and then…." One thing goes on to the next, doesn't it? You're just caught in this one thing going on to the next, motivated by aversion. So rather than just being caught in that whole stream of associated thoughts, concepts, deliberately think: "He is the most selfish person I have ever met." And then the ending, emptiness. "He is a rotten egg, a dirty rat, he did this and then he did that," and you can see, it's really funny, isn't it? When I first went to Wat Pah Pong, I used to have tremendous anger and aversion arise. I'd just feel so frustrated, sometimes because I never knew what was really happening, and I didn't want to have to conform so much as I had to there. I was just fuming. Ajahn Chah would be going on — he could give two hour talks in Lao — and I'd have a terrible pain in the knees. So I'd have those thoughts: "Why don't you ever stop talking? I thought Dhamma was simple, why does he have to take two hours to say something?" I'd become very critical of everybody, and then I started reflecting on this and listening to myself, getting angry, being critical, being nasty, resenting, ″I don′t want this, I don′t want that, I don′t like this, I don′t see why I have to sit here, I don′t want to be bothered with this silly thing, I don′t know…″, on and on. And I kept thinking, "Is that a very nice person that′s saying that? Is that what you want to be like, that thing that′s always complaining and criticising, finding fault, is that the kind of person you want to be?" "No! I don′t want to be like that."

But I had to make it fully conscious to really see it, rather than believe in it. I felt very righteous within myself, and when you feel righteous, and indignant, and you′re feeling that they′re wrong, then you can easily believe those kinds of thoughts: "I see no need for this kind of thing, after all, the Buddha said… the Buddha would never have allowed this, the Buddha; I know Buddhism!" Bring it up into conscious form, where you can see it, make it absurd, and then you have a perspective on it and it gets quite amusing. You can see what comedy is about! We take ourselves so seriously, "I′m such an important person, my life is so terribly important, that I must be extremely serious about it at all moments. My problems are so important, so terribly important; I have to spend a lot of time with my problems because they′re so important." One thinks of oneself somehow as very important, so then think it, deliberately think, "I′m a Very Important Person, my problems are very important and serious." When you′re thinking that, it sounds funny, it sounds silly, because really, you realise you′re not terribly important — none of us are. And the problems we make out of life are trivial things. Some people can ruin their whole lives by creating endless problems, and taking it all so seriously.

If you think of yourself as an important and serious person, then trivial things or foolish things are things that you don′t want. If you want to be a good person, and a saintly one, then evil conditions are things that you have to repress out of consciousness. If you want to be a loving and generous type of being, then any type of meanness or jealousy or stinginess is something that you have to repress or annihilate in your mind. So whatever you are most afraid of in your life that you might really be, think it out, watch it. Make confessions: "I want to be a tyrant!", "I want to be a heroin smuggler!" "I want to be a member of the Mafia!", "I want to…." Whatever it is. We're not concerned with the quality of it any more, but the mere characteristic that it's an impermanent condition; it's unsatisfactory, because there's no point in it that can every really satisfy you. It comes and it goes, and it's not self.

The Hindrances and their Cessation

As we listen inwardly, we begin to recognise the whispering voices of guilt, remorse and desire, jealousy and fear, lust and greed. Sometimes you can listen to what lust says: "I want, I've got to have, I've got to have, I want, I want!" Sometimes it doesn't even have any object. You can just feel lust with no object, so you find an object. The desire to get something, "I want something, I want something! I've got to have something, I want…." You can hear that if you listen to your mind. Usually we find an object for lust, such as sex; or we can spend our time fantasizing.

Lust may take the form of looking for something to eat, or anything to absorb into, become something, unite with something. Lust is always on the look-out, always seeking for something. It can be an attractive object which is allowable for monks, like a nice robe or an alms bowl or some delicious food. You can see the inclination to want it, to touch it, to try and somehow get it, own it, possess it, make it mine, consume. And that's lust, that's a force in nature which we must recognise; not to condemn it and say, "I'm a terrible person because I have lust!" — because that's another ego reinforcement, isn't it? As if we are not supposed to have any lust, as if there were any human being who didn't experience desire for something!

These are conditions in nature which we must recognise and see; not through condemnation, but through understanding them. So we get to really know the movement in our mind of lust, greed, seeking something — and the desire-to-get-rid-of. You can witness that also — wanting to get rid of something you have, or some situation, or pain itself. "I want to get rid of the pain I have, I want to get rid of my weakness, I want to get rid of dullness, I want to get rid of my restlessness, my lust. I want to get rid of everything that annoys me. Why did God create mosquitoes? I want to get rid of the pests."

Sensual desire is the first of the hindrances (nīvarana). Aversion is the second one; your mind is haunted with not wanting, with petty irritations and resentments, and then you try and annihilate them. So that's an obstacle to your mental vision, that's a hindrance. I'm not saying we should try to get rid of that hindrance — that's aversion — but to know it, to know its force, to understand it as you experience it. Then you recognise the desire to get rid of things in yourself, the desire to get rid of things around you, desire not to be here, desire not to be alive, desire to no longer exist. That's why we like to sleep, isn't it? Then we can not exist for a while. In sleep consciousness we don't exist because there isn't that same feeling of being alive anymore. That's annihilation. So some people like to sleep a lot because living is too painful for them, too boring, too unpleasant. We get depressed, full of doubt and despair, and we tend to seek an escape through sleep; trying to annihilate our problems, force them out of consciousness.

The third hindrance is sleepiness, lethargy, dullness, sloth, drowsiness, torpor; we tend to react to this with aversion. But this also can be understood. Dullness can be known — the heaviness of body and mind, slow, dull movement. Witness the aversion to it, the wanting to get rid of it. You observe the feeling of dullness in the body and mind. Even the knowledge of dullness is changing, unsatisfactory, not self (anicca, dukkha, anattā).

Restlessness is the opposite of dullness; this is the fourth hindrance. You're not dull at all, you're not sleepy, but restless, nervous, anxious tense. Again, it may have no specific object. Rather than the feeling of wanting to sleep, restlessness is a more obsessive state. You want to do something, run here… do this… do that… talk, go round, run around. And if you have to sit still for a little while when you're feeling restless, you feel penned in, caged; all you can think of is jumping, running about, doing something. So you can witness that also, especially when you're contained within a form where you can't just follow restlessness. The robes that bhikkhus wear are not conducive to jumping up into trees and swinging from the branches. We can't act out this leaping tendency of the mind, so we have to watch it.

Doubt is the fifth hindrance. Sometimes our doubts may seem very important, and we like to give them a lot of attention. We are very deluded by the quality of it, because it appears to be so substantial: "Some doubts are trivial, yes, but this is an Important Doubt. I've got to know the answer. I've got to be sure. I've got to know definitely, should I do this or should I do that! Am I doing this right? Should I go there, or should I stay here a bit longer? Am I wasting my time? Have I been wasting my life? Is Buddhism the right way or isn't it? Maybe it's not the right religion!” This is doubt. You can spend the rest of your life worrying about whether you should do this or that, but one thing you can know is that doubt is a condition of the mind. Sometimes that tends to be very subtle and deluding. In our position as ‘the one who knows’, we know doubt is doubt. Whether it’s an important or trivial one, it’s just doubt, that’s all. “Should I stay here, or should I go somewhere else?” It’s doubt. “Should I wash my clothes today or tomorrow?” That’s doubt. Not very important, but then there are the important ones. “Have I attained Stream Entry yet? What is a Stream Enterer, anyway? Is Ajahn Sumedho an Arahant (enlightened one)? Are there any Arahants at the present time?” Then people from other religions come and say, “Yours is wrong, ours is right!” Then you think, “Maybe they’re right! Maybe ours is wrong.” What we can know is that there is doubt. This is being the knowing, knowing what we can know, knowing that we don’t know. Even when you’re igriorant of something, if you’re aware of the fact that you don’t know, then that awareness is knowledge.

So this is being the knowing, knowing what we can know. The Five Hindrances are your teachers, because they’re not the inspiring, radiant gurus from the picture books. They can be pretty trivial, petty, foolish, annoying and obsessive. They keep pushing, jabbing, knocking us down all the time until we give them proper attention and understanding, until they are no longer problems. That’s why one has to be very patient; we have to have all the patience in the world, and the humility to learn from these five teachers.

And what do we learn? That these are just conditions in the mind; they arise and pass away; they’re unsatisfactory, not self. Sometimes one has very important messages in one’s life. We tend to believe those messages, but what we *can* know is that those are changing conditions: and if we patiently endure through that, then things change automatically, on their own, and we have the openness and clarity of mind to act spontaneously, rather than react to conditions. With bare attention, with mindfulness, things go on their own, you don't have to get rid of them because everything that begins, ends. There is nothing to get rid of, you just have to be patient with them and allow things to take their natural course into cessation.

When you are patient, allowing things to cease, then you begin to know cessation — silence, emptiness, clarity — the mind clears, stillness. The mind is still vibrant, it's not oblivious, repressed or asleep, and you can hear the silence of the mind.

To allow cessation means that we have to be very kind, very gentle and patient, humble, not taking sides with anything, the good, the bad, the pleasure, or the pain. Gentle recognition allows things to change according to their nature, without interfering. So then we learn to turn away from seeking absorption into the objects of the senses. We find our peace in the emptiness of the mind, in its clarity, in its silence.

Emptiness and Form

When your mind is quiet, listen, and you can hear that vibrational sound in the mind -'the sound of silence'. What is it? Is it an ear sound, or is it an outward sound? Is it the sound of the mind or the sound of the nervous system, or what? Whatever it is, it's always there, and it can be used in meditation as something to turn toward.

Recognising that all that arises passes away, we begin to look at that which doesn't arise or pass, and is always there. If you start trying to think about that sound, have a name for it, or claim any kind of attainments from it, then of course you are using it in the wrong way. It's merely a standard to refer to when you've reached the limit of the mind, and the end of the mind as far as we can observe it. So from that position you can begin to watch. You can think and still hear that sound (if you're thinking deliberately, that is), but once you're lost in thought, then you forget it and you don't hear it anymore. So if you get lost in thought, then once you're aware that you're thinking again, turn to that sound, and listen to it for a long time. Where before you'd get carried away by emotions or obsessions or the hindrances that arise, now you can practise by gently, very patiently reflecting on the particular condition of the mind as anicca, dukkha, anattā, and then letting go of it. It's a gentle, subtle letting go, not a slam-bang rejection of any condition. So the attitude, the right understanding is more important than anything else. Don't make anything out of that sound of silence. People get excited, thinking they've attained something, or discovered something, but that in itself is another condition you create around the silence. This is a very cool practice, not an exciting one; use it skilfully and gently for letting go, rather than for holding onto a view that you've attained something! If there's anything that blocks anyone in their meditation, it's the view that they've attained something from it!

Now, you can reflect on the conditions of the body and mind and concentrate on them. You can sweep through the body and recognise sensations, such as the vibrations in the hands or feet, or you can concentrate on any point in your body. Feel the sensation of the tongue in the mouth, touching the palate, or the upper lip on top of the lower, or just bring into the consciousness the sensation of wetness of the mouth, or the pressure of the clothes on your body — just those subtle sensations that we don't bother to notice. Reflecting on these subtle physical sensations, concentrate on them and your body will relax. The human body likes to be noticed. It appreciates being concentrated on in a gentle and peaceful way, but if you're inconsiderate and hate the body, it really starts becoming quite unbearable. Remember we have to live within this structure for the rest of our lives. So you'd better learn how to live in it with a good attitude. You say, "Oh, the body doesn't matter, it's just a disgusting thing, gets old, gets sick and dies. The body doesn't matter, it's the mind that counts." That attitude is quite common amongst Buddhists! But it actually takes patience to concentrate on your body, other than out of vanity. Vanity is a misuse of the human body, but this sweeping awareness is skilful. It's not to enforce a sense of ego, but simply an act of goodwill and consideration for a living body — which is not you anyway.

So your meditation now is on the five khandas* and the emptiness of the mind. Investigate these until you fully understand that all that arises passes away and is not self. Then there's no grasping of anything as being oneself, and you are free from that desire to know yourself as a quality or a substance. This is liberation from birth and death.

This path of wisdom is not one of developing concentration to get into a trance state, get high and get away from things. You have to be very honest about intention. Are we meditating to run away from things? Are we trying to get into a state where we can suppress all thoughts? This wisdom practice is a very gentle one of even allowing the most horrible thoughts to appear, and let them go. You have an escape hatch, it's like a safety valve where you can let off the steam when there's too much pressure. Normally, if you dream a lot, then you can let off steam in sleep. But no wisdom comes from that, does it? That is just like being a dumb animal; you develop a habit of doing something and then getting exhausted, then crashing out, then getting up, doing something and crashing out again. But this path is a thorough investigation and an understanding of the limitations of the mortal condition of the body and mind. Now you're developing the ability to turn away from the conditioned and to release your identity from mortality.

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*__khandas__: the five categories through which the Buddha summarised the existential human being, i.e. the body (rūpa), feelings (vedanā), perception (saññā), mental formations (saṅkhārā) and the sense consciousness (viññāṇa). In simple terms, 'the body and mind'.

You're breaking through that illusion that you're a mortal thing — but I'm not telling you that you're an immortal creature either, because you'll start grasping at *that*! "My true nature is one with the ultimate, absolute Truth. I am one with the Lord. My real nature is the Deathless, timeless eternity of bliss." But you notice that the Buddha refrained from using poetic inspiring phrases; not that they're wrong, but because we attach to them. We would settle for that identity with the ultimate, or one with God, or the eternal bliss of the Deathless Realm, and so forth. You get very starry-eyed saying things like that. But it's much more skilful to watch that tendency to want to name or conceive what is inconceivable, to be able to tell somebody else, or describe it just to feel that you have attained something. It is more important to watch that than to follow it. Not that you haven't realised anything, either, but be that careful and that vigilant not to attach to that realisation, because if you do, of course this will just take you to despair again.

If you do get carried away, as soon as you realise you got carried away, then stop. Certainly don't go round feeling guilty about it or being discouraged, but just stop that. Calm down, let go, let go of it. You notice that religious people have insights, and they get very glassy-eyed. Born-again Christians are just aglow with this fervour. Very impressive, too! I must admit, it's very impressive to see people so radiant. But in Buddhism, that state is called 'saññāvipallāsa' — 'meditation madness'. When a good teacher sees you're in that state, he puts you in a hut out in the woods and tells you not to go near anyone! I remember I went like that in Nong Khai the first year before I went to Ajahn Chah, I thought I was fully enlightened, just sitting there in my hut. I knew everything in the world, understood everything. I was just so radiant, and… but I didn't have anyone to talk to. I couldn't speak Thai, so I couldn't go and hassle the Thai monks. But the British Consul from Vientiane happened to come over one day, and somebody brought him to my hut… and I really let him have it, double-barrelled! He sat there in a stunned state, and, being English, he was very, very, very polite, and every time he got up to go I wouldn't let him. I couldn't stop, it was like Niagara Falls, this enormous power coming out, and there was no way I could stop it myself. Finally he left, made an escape somehow: I never saw him again, I wonder why?!

So when we go through that kind of experience, it's important to recognise it. Its nothing dangerous if you know what it is. Be patient with it, don't believe it or indulge in it. You notice Buddhist monks never go around saying much about what 'level of enlightenment' they have — it's just not to be related. When people ask us to teach, we don't teach about our enlightenment, but about the Four Noble Truths as the way for *them* to be enlightened. Nowadays there are all kinds of people claiming to be enlightened or Maitreya Buddhas, avatars, and all have large followings; people are willing to believe that quite easily! But this particular emphasis of the Buddha is on recognising the way things are rather than *believing* in what other people tell us, or say. This is a path of wisdom, in which we're exploring or investigating the limits of the mind. Witness and see: 'sabbe saṅkhara aniccā', 'all conditioned phenomena are impermanent'; 'sabbe dhammā anattā', 'all things are not self.'

INNER VIGILANCE

Now, as to the practice of mindfulness. Concentration is where you put your attention on an object, sustain your attention on that one point (such as the tranquillising rhythm of normal breathing), until you become that sign itself, and the sense of subject and object diminishes. Mindfulness, with vipassanā meditation, is the opening of the mind. You no longer concentrate on just one point, but you observe insightfully and reflect on the conditions that come and go, and on the silence of the empty mind. To do this involves letting go of an object; you're not holding on to any particular object, but observing that whatever arises passes away. This is insight meditation, or 'vipassanā'.

With what I call 'inner listening', you can hear the noises that go on in the mind, the desire, the fears, things that you've repressed and have never allowed to be fully conscious. But now, even if there are obsessive thoughts or fears, emotions coming up, then be willing to allow them to become conscious so that you can let them go to cessation. If there's nothing coming or going, then just be in the emptiness, in the silence of the mind. You can hear a high frequency sound in the mind, that's always there, it's not an ear sound. You can turn to that, when you let go of the conditions of the mind. But be honest with your intentions. So if you're turning to the silence, the silent sound of the mind, out of aversion to the conditions, it's just a repression again, it's not purification.

If your intention is wrong, even though you do concentrate on emptiness, you will not get a good result, because you've been misled. You haven't wisely reflected on things, you haven't let anything go, you're just turning away out of aversion, just saying, "I don't want to see that," so you turn away. Now this practice is a patient one of being willing to endure what seems unendurable. It's an inner vigilance, watching, listening, even experimenting. In this practice, the right understanding is the important thing, rather than the emptiness or form or anything like that. Right understanding comes through the reflection that whatever arises, passes away; reflection that even emptiness is not self. If you claim that you are one who's realised emptiness as if you'd attained something, that in itself is wrong intention, isn't it? Thinking you're somebody who has attained or realised on the personal level comes from a sense of self. So we make no claims. If there is something inside you that wants to claim something, then you observe *that* as a condition of the mind.

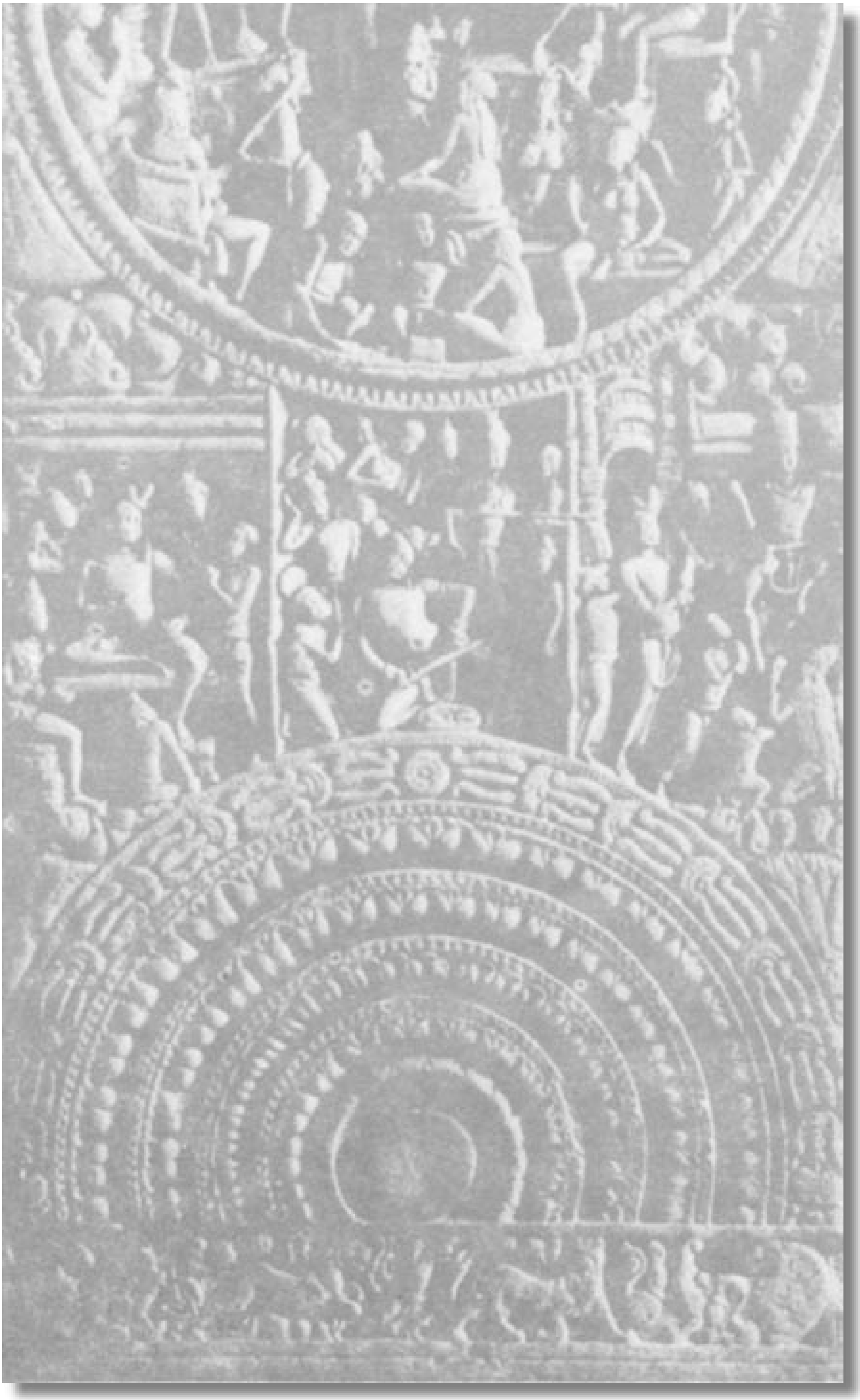
The sound of silence is always there so you can use it as a guide rather than an end in itself. So it's a very skilful practice of watching and listening, rather than just repressing conditions out of aversion to them. But then the emptiness is pretty boring actually. We're used to having more entertainment. How long can you sit all day being aware of an empty mind, anyway? So recognise that our practice is not to attach to peacefulness or silence or emptiness as an end, but to use it as a skilful means to be the knowing and to be alert. When the mind's empty you can watch — there's still awareness, but you're not seeking rebirth in any condition, because there's not a sense of self in it. Self always comes with the seeking of something or trying to get rid of something. Listen to the self saying, “ I want to attain samādhi,” “I’ve got to attain jhāna.” That’s self talking: “I’ve got to get first jhāna, second jhāna, before I can do anything,” that idea, you’ve got to get something first. What can you know when you read the teachings from different teachers? You can know when you’re confused, when you’re doubting, when you’re feeling aversion and suspicion. You can know that you’re being the knowing, rather than deciding which teacher is the right one.

The mettā practice means to use a gentle kindness by being able to endure what you might believe is unendurable. If you have an obsessed mind that goes on and chats away and nags, and then you want to get rid of it, the more you try to suppress and get rid of it, the worse it gets. And then sometimes it stops and you think, “Oh, I’ve got rid of it, it’s gone.” Then it’ll start again and you think, “Oh no! I thought I’d got rid of that.” So no matter how many times it comes back and goes, or whatever, take it as it comes. Be one who takes one step at a time. When you’re willing to be one who has all the patience in the world to be with the existing condition, you can let it cease. The results of allowing things to cease are that you begin to experience release, because you realise that you’re not carrying things around that you used to. Somehow things that used to make you angry no longer really bother you very much, and that surprises you. You begin to feel at ease in situations that you never felt at ease in before, because you’re allowing things to cease, rather than just holding on and recreating fears and anxieties. Even ‘dis-ease’ of those around you doesn’t influence you. You’re not reacting to other’s lack of ease by getting tense yourself. That comes through letting go and allowing things to cease.

So the general picture now is for you to have this inner vigilance, and to note any obsessive things that come up. If they keep coming back all the time, then you're obviously attached in some way — either through aversion or infatuation. So, you can begin to recognise attachment rather than just try to get rid of it. Once you can understand it and you can let go, then you can turn to the silence of the mind because there's no point in doing anything else. There's no point in holding on or hanging on to conditions any longer than necessary. Let them cease. When we react to what arises, we create a cycle of habits. A habit is something that is cyclical, it keeps going in a cycle, it has no way of ceasing. But if you let go, and leave things alone, then what arises ceases. It doesn't become a cycle.

So emptiness isn't getting rid of everything; it's not total blankness, but an infinite potential for creation to arise and to pass, without your being deluded by it. The idea of me as a creator, my artistic talents, expressing myself — its an incredible egotistical trip, isn't it? "This is what I've done, this is mine." They say, "Oh, you're very skilled, aren't you? You're a genius!" Yet so much of creative art tends to be regurgitations of people's fears and desires. It's not really creative; it's just recreating things. It's not coming from an empty mind, but from an ego, which has no real message to give other than that it's full of death and selfishness. On a universal level it has no real message other than "Look at me!" as a person, as an ego. Yet the empty mind has infinite potential for creation. One doesn't think of creating things; but creation can be done with no self and nobody doing it — it happens.

So we leave creation to the Dhamma rather than think that that's something to be responsible for. All we have to do now, all that's necessary for us — conventionally speaking, as human beings, as people — is to let go; or not attach. Let things go. Do good, refrain from doing evil, be mindful. Quite a basic message.



Reflection

THE NEED FOR WISDOM IN THE WORLD

We are here with one common interest among all of us. Instead of a room of individuals all following their own views and opinions, tonight we are all here because of a common interest in the practice of the Dhamma. When this many people come together on Sunday night, you begin to see the potential for human existence, a society based on this common interest in the truth. In the Dhamma we merge. What arises passes, and in its passing is peace. So when we begin to let go of our habits and attachments to the conditioned phenomena, we begin to realise the wholeness and oneness of the mind.

This is a very important reflection for this time, when there are so many quarrels and wars going on because people cannot agree on anything. The Chinese against the Russians, the Americans against the Soviets, and on it goes. Over what? What are they fighting about? About their perceptions of the world. "This is my land and I want it *this* way. I want *this* kind of government, and this kind of political and economic system," and it goes on and on. It goes on to the point where we slaughter and torture until we destroy the land we are trying to liberate, and enslave or confuse all the people we are trying to free. Why? Because of not understanding the way things are.

The way of the Dhamma is one of observing nature and harmonising our lives with the natural forces. In European civilisation we never really looked at the world in that way. We have idealised it. If everything were an ideal, then it should be a certain way. And when we just attach to ideals, we end up doing what we have done to our earth at this time, polluting it, and being at the point of totally destroying it because we do not understand the limitations placed on us by the earth's conditions. So in all things of this nature, we sometimes have to learn the hard way through doing it all wrong and making a total mess. Hopefully it is not an insoluble situation.

Now, in this monastery the monks and nuns are practising the Dhamma with diligence. For the whole month of January we are not even talking, but dedicating our lives and offering the blessings of our practice for the welfare of all sentient beings. This whole month is a continuous prayer and offering from this community for the welfare of all sentient beings. It is a time just for realisation of truth, watching and listening and observing the way things are; a time to refrain from indulging in selfish habits, moods, to give that all up for the welfare of all sentient beings. This is a sign to all people to reflect on this kind of dedication and sacrifice of moving towards truth. It's a pointer towards realising truth in your own life, rather than just living in a perfunctory, habitual way, following the expedient conditions of the moment. It's a reflection for others. To give up immoral, selfish or unkind pursuits for being one who is moving towards impeccability, generosity, morality and compassionate action in the world. If we do not do this then it is a completely hopeless situation. They might as well just blow it all up because if nobody is willing to use their life for anything more than just selfish indulgence, then it is worthless.

This country is a generous and benevolent country, but we just take it for granted and exploit it for what we can get. We do not think about giving anything to it much. We demand a lot, wanting the Government to make everything nice for us, and then we criticise them when they cannot do it. Nowadays you find selfish individuals living their lives on their own terms, without wisely reflecting and living in a way that would be a blessing to the society as a whole. As human beings we can make our lives into great blessings; or we can become a plague on the landscape, taking the Earth's resources for personal gain and getting as much as we can for ourselves, for 'me' and 'mine'.

In the practice of the Dhamma the sense of 'me' and 'mine' starts fading away — the sense of 'me' and 'mine' as this little creature sitting here that has a mouth and has to eat. If I just follow the desires of my body and emotions, then I become a greedy selfish little creature. But when I reflect on the nature of my physical condition and how it can be skilfully used in this lifetime for the welfare of all sentient beings, then this being becomes a blessing. (Not that one thinks of oneself as a blessing, "I am a blessing"; it is another kind of conceit if you start attaching to the idea that you are a blessing!) So one is actually living each day in a way that one's life is something that brings joy, compassion, kindness, or at least is not causing unnecessary confusion and misery. The least we can do is keep the Five Precepts* so that our bodies and speech are not being used for disruption, cruelty and exploitation on this planet. Is that asking too much of any of you? Is it too fantastic to give up just doing what you feel like at the moment in order to be at least a little more careful and responsible for what you do and say? We can all try to help, be generous and kind and considerate to the other beings that we have to share this planet with. We can all wisely investigate and understand the limitations we are under, so that we are no longer deluded by the sensory world. This is why we meditate. For a monk or nun this is a way of life, a sacrifice of our particular desires and whims for the welfare of the community, of the Saṅgha.

---

*__The Five Precepts__ are the basic moral precepts to be observed by every practising Buddhist.

If I start thinking of myself and of what I want, then I forget about the rest of you because what I particularly want at the moment might not be good for the rest of you. But when I use this refuge in Saṅgha as my guide, then the welfare of the Saṅgha is my joy and I give up my personal whims for the welfare of the Saṅgha. That is why the monks and nuns all shave their heads and live under the discipline established by the Buddha. This is a way of training oneself to let go of self as a way of living: a way that brings no shame or guilt or fear into one's life. The sense of disruptive individuality is lost because one is no longer determined to be independent from the rest, or to dominate, but to harmonise and live for the welfare of all beings, rather than for the welfare of oneself.

The lay community has the opportunity to participate in this. The monks and nuns are dependent upon the lay community just for basic survival, so it is an important thing for the lay community to take that responsibility. That takes you lay people out of your particular problems and obsessions because when you take time to come here to give, to help, to practise meditation and listen to the Dhamma, we find ourselves merging in that oneness of truth. We can be here together without envy, jealousy, fear, doubt, greed or lust because of our inclination towards realising that truth: Make that the intention for your life; don't waste your life on foolish pursuits!

This truth, it can be called many things. Religions try to convey that truth in some ways — through concepts and doctrines — but we have forgotten what religion is about. In the past hundred years or so, our society has been following materialistic science, rational thought and idealism based on our ability to conceive of political and economic systems, yet we cannot make them work, can we? We cannot really create a democracy or a true communism or a true socialism — we cannot create that because we are still deluded by the sense of self. So it ends up in tyranny and in selfishness, fear and suspicion. So the present world situation is a result of not understanding the way things are, and a time when each one of us, if we really are concerned about what we can do, has to make our own life into something worthy. Now how do we do this?

Firstly, you have to admit the kind of motivations and selfish indulgence of emotional immaturity in order to know them and be able to let them go; to open the mind to the way things are, to be alert. Just our practice of ānāpānasati is a beginning, isn't it? It's not just another habit or pastime you develop to keep you busy, but a means of putting forth effort to observe, concentrate and be with the way the breath is. You might instead spend a lot of time watching television, going to the pub and doing all kinds of things that are not very skilful — somehow that seems more important than spending any time watching your own breath, doesn't it? You watch the TV news and see people being slaughtered in Lebanon — somehow it seems more important than just sitting watching your inhalation and exhalation. But this is the mind that does not understand the ways things are; so we are willing to watch the shadows on the screen and the misery that can be conveyed through a television screen about greed, hatred and stupidity, carried on in a most despicable way. Wouldn't it be much more skilful to spend that time being with the way the body is right now? It would be better to have respect for this physical being here so that one learns not to exploit it, misuse it, and then resent it when it doesn't give you the happiness that you want.

In the monastic life we don't have television because we dedicate our lives to doing more useful things, like watching our breath and walking up and down the forest path. The neighbours think we are dotty. Every day they see people going out wrapped up in blankets and walking up and down. "What are they doing? They must be crazy!" We had a fox hunt here a couple of weeks ago. The hounds were chasing foxes through our woods (doing something really useful and beneficial for all sentient beings!). Sixty dogs and all these grown up people chasing after a wretched little fox. It would be better to spend the time walking up and down a forest path, wouldn't it? Better for the fox, for the dogs, for Hammer Wood and for the fox-hunters. But people in West Sussex think they are normal. *They* are the normal ones and *we* are the nutty ones. When we watch our breath and walk up and down the forest path at least we are not terrorising foxes! How would you feel if sixty dogs were chasing you? Just imagine what your heart would do if you had a pack of sixty dogs chasing after you and people on horseback telling them to get you. It's ugly when you really reflect on this. Yet that is considered normal, or even a desirable thing to do in this part of England. Because people do not take time to reflect, we can be victims of habit, caught in desires and habits. If we really investigated fox hunting, we wouldn't do it. If you have any intelligence and really consider what that is about, you would not want to do it. Whereas with simple things like walking up and down on a forest path, and watching your breath, you begin to be aware and much more sensitive. The truth begins to be revealed to us through just the simple, seemingly insignificant practices that we do. Just as when we keep the Five Precepts that is a field of blessing to the world.

When you start reflecting on the way things are and remember when your life has really been in danger, you will know how horrible it is. It is an absolutely terrifying experience. One doesn't intentionally want to subject any other creature to that experience, if you have reflected on it. There is no way in which one is intentionally going to subject another creature to that terror. If you do not reflect, you think foxes do not matter, or fish do not matter. They are just there for my pleasure — it is something to do on a Sunday afternoon. I can remember one woman who came to see me and was very upset about us buying the Hammer Pond*. She said, "You know I get so much peace; I don't come here to fish, I come here for the peacefulness of being here." She spent every Sunday out catching fish just to be at peace. I thought she looked quite healthy, she was a little plump, she was not starving to death.

She did not really need to fish for survival. I said, "Well, you could, if you don't need to fish for survival — you have enough money, I hope, to buy fish — you could come here after we buy this pond, and you could just meditate here. You don't have to fish." She didn't want to meditate! Then she went on about rabbits eating her cabbages, so she had to put out all kinds of things that would kill rabbits to keep them from eating her cabbages. This woman never reflects on *anything.* She is begrudging those rabbits her cabbages, but she can very well go out and buy cabbages. But rabbits *can't.* Rabbits have to do the best they can by eating someone else's cabbages. But she never really opened her mind to the way things are, to what is truly kind and benevolent. I would not say she was a cruel or heartless person, just an ignorant middle class woman who never reflected on nature or realised the way the Dhamma is. So she thinks that cabbages are there for her and not for rabbits, and fish are there so that she can have a peaceful Sunday afternoon torturing them.

Now this ability to reflect and observe is what the Buddha was pointing to in his teachings, as the liberation from the blind following of habit and convention. It is a way to liberate this being from the delusion of the sensory condition through wise reflection on the way things are. We begin to observe ourselves, the desire for something, or the aversion, the dullness or the stupidity of the mind. We are not picking and choosing or trying to create pleasant conditions for personal pleasure, but are even willing to endure unpleasant or miserable conditions in order to understand them as just that, and be able to let them go. We are starting to free ourselves from running away from things we don't like. We also begin to be much more careful about how we do live. Once you see what it is all about, you really want to be very, very careful about what you do and say. You can have no intention to live life at the expense of any other creature. One does not feel that one's life is so much more important than anyone else's. One begins to feel the freedom and the lightness in that harmony with nature rather than the heaviness of exploitation of nature for personal gain. When you open the mind to the truth, then you realise there is nothing to fear. What arises passes away, what is born dies, and is not self — so that our sense of being caught in an identity with this human body fades out. We don't see ourselves as some isolated, alienated entity lost in a mysterious and frightening universe. We don't feel overwhelmed by it, trying to find a little piece of it that we can grasp and feel safe with, because we feel at peace with it. Then we have merged with the truth.

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*Being part of a Buddhist monastery, Hammer Wood and Pond of course became wildlife sanctuaries.

¤

The Refuges and Precepts

The 'Going for Refuge' and taking the Precepts define a person as a practising Buddhist.

Going for Refuge gives a continual perspective on life by referring one's conduct and understanding to the qualities of Buddha (wisdom), Dhamma (truth) and Saṅgha (virtue). The Precepts are also for reflection and to define one's actions as a responsible human being.

There is a formal means of requesting the Refuges and Precepts from a bhikkhu or nun, which is as follows:

The lay person should bow three times and, with hands in añjali*, recite the following:

MAYAṂ/AHAṂ BHANTE (AYYE) TI-SARANENA SAHA PAÑCA SĪLĀNI YĀCĀMA/YĀCĀMI
We/I, Venerable Sir (Sister), request the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts

DUTIYAMPI MAYAṂ/AHAṂ BHANTE (AYYE)…
For the second time we/I…

TATIYAMPI MAYAṂ/AHAṂ BHANTE (AYYE)…
For the third time well…

The bhikkhu or nun will then recite the following three times, after which the lay person should repeat three times:

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMĀSAMBUDDHASSA
Homage to the Blessed One, the Noble One, and Perfectly Enlightened One.

***Añjali**: the hands are held vertically, with palms together, close to the chest.

The bhikkhu or nun will then recite the following line by line, which the lay person should repeat line by line:

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
To the Buddha I go for Refuge.

Dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
To the Dhamma I go for Refuge.

Sanghaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
To the Saṅgha I go for Refuge.

Dutiyampi buddhaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
For the second time…

Dutiyampi dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
For the second time…

Dutiyampi sanghaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
For the second time…

Tatiyampi buddhaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
For the third time…

Tatiyampi dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
For the third time…

Tattyampi sanghaṃ saranaṃ gacchāmi
For the third time…

The bhikkhu or nun then says:

Tisaraṇa — gamanaṃ niṭṭhttaṃ
This completes the going to the Three Refuges.

The lay person responds:
Āma bhante (ayye)
Yes, Venerable Sir (Sister).

The bhikkhu or nun then recites the Precepts singly, and the lay person repeats line by line:

1. Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
   I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
   I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
   I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.
4. Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
   I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
5. Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
   I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating liquors and drugs which lead to carelessness.

After the Five Precepts have been taken, the bhikkhu or nun will conclude with the following:

Imāni pañca sikkhāpadāni
These Five Precepts
Sīlena sugatiṃ yanti
Have morality as a vehicle for happiness,
Sīlena bhogasampadā
Have morality as a vehicle for good fortune,
Sīlena nibbutiṃ yanti
Have morality as a vehicle for liberation.
Tasmā sīlaṃ visodhaye
Let morality therefore be purified.

After taking the Precepts, the lay person then bows three times to the bhikkhu or nun.

Pronunciation:

ā as in f*a*ther
a as in *a*bout
i as in h*i*t
ī as in mach*i*ne
o as in fl*o*w
u as in g*oo*d
e as in s*a*y
c, cc as in *ch*urch
ñ as in ca*ny*on
ṃ as in ha*ng*

The Text

The material in this book has been edited from talks given at Chithurst Forest Monastery in January 1984, with the exception of three sections. These are ‘Effort and Relaxation’, ‘Kindness (Mettā)’ and ‘The Hindrances and Their Cessation’, which were taken from talks given at the International Forest Monastery, Ubon, N.E. Thailand in December 1982.

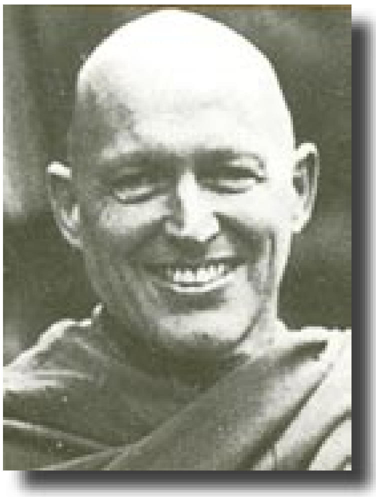
The Photographs

The photographs are of slabs from the ruins of the ancient stupa at Amarāvatī in Andhra Pradesh, India; they are reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum, London.

Investigation (page 12): the stupa, a monumental reliquary, contains the relics of a saint. As the object of pilgrimages, it symbolizes the universal quest for spiritual truth.

Instruction (page 22): the iconographical footprints of the Buddha. They represent the path that a teacher has taken, to be followed by his disciples.

Reflection (page 60): the lotus of wisdom in a scene of everyday human activity.



Venerable Ajahn Sumedho was ordained as a Theravadin bhikkhu in Thailand in 1966. He spent ten years in N.E. Thailand training under Venerable Ajahn Chah, a master of the forest tradition. He was invited to Britain in 1976 by the English Sangha Trust and has subsequently established two major monasteries — Chithurst and Amaravatī — as well as smaller branch monasteries. He was elected President of the Buddhist Societv of Great Britain in 1984.

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Mindfulness of Breathing & Four Elements Meditation

Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw

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Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw

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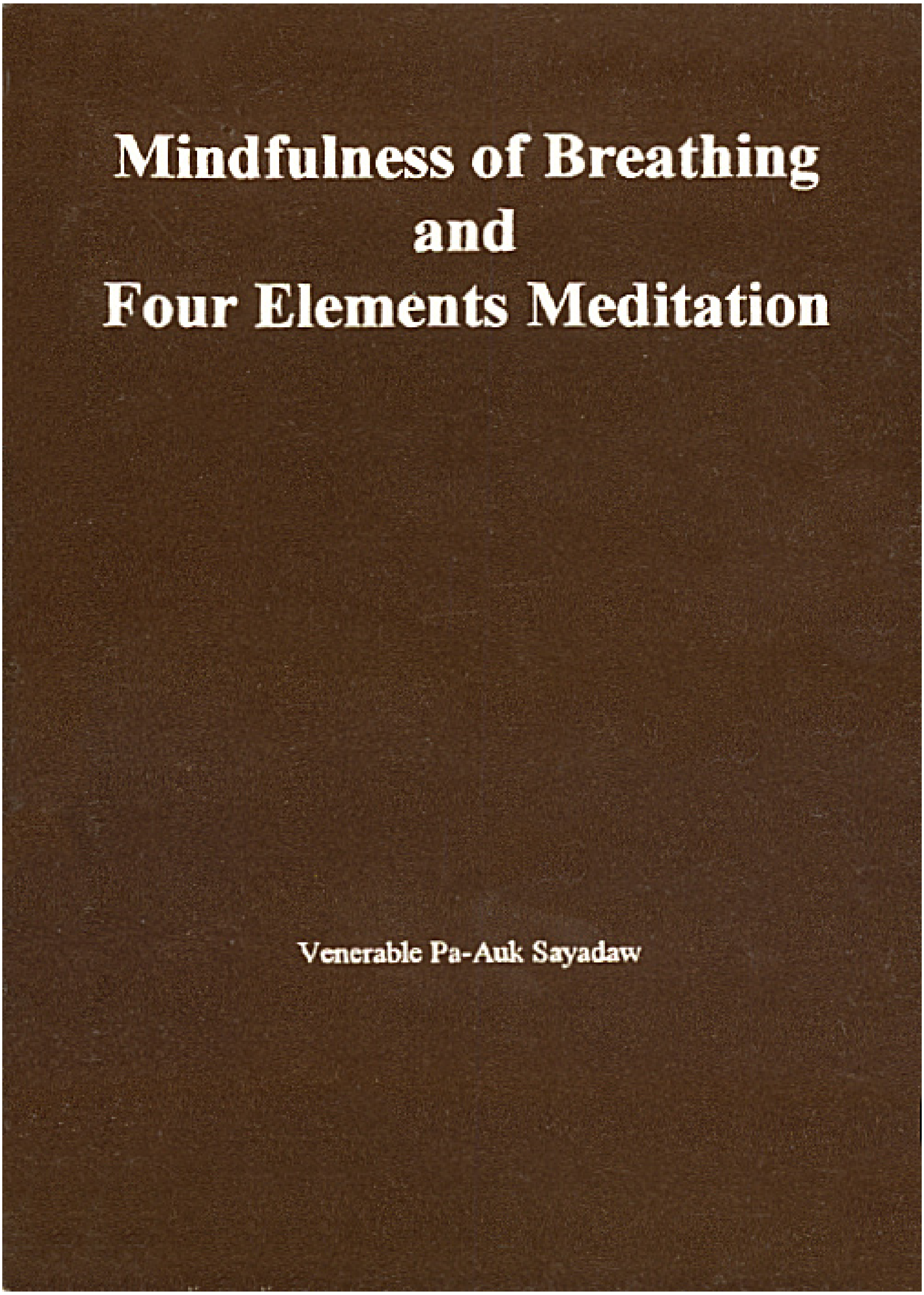

Mindfulness of Breathing
and
Four Elements Meditation

Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw

Namo Tassa,	**Homage to Him,**
Bhagavato,	**the Blessed,**
Arahato,	**the Worthy,**
Sammā-	**the Perfectly**
Sambuddhassa.	**Self-Enlightened One.**

Preface to the Revised Edition

This book contains the instructions for mindfulness-of-breathing meditation, four-elements meditation, and the subsequent detailed discernment of materiality. The last section of this book covers some of the relevant theory.

This revised edition has clarified the language of the first edition and has translated most of the Pāḷi terms previously left untranslated. Several pages have been added by the Sayadaw covering the balancing of the five controlling faculties and seven factors of enlightenment.

There is also the addition of his explanation of the difference between the experience of Nibbāna and the experience of life-continuum *(bhavaṅga)*.

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Part 1

How to Develop Mindfulness-of-Breathing

The development of mindfulness-of-breathing *(ānāpānassati)* is taught by the Buddha in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta. There he says:

'Bhikkhus, here in this Teaching a bhikkhu having gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down cross-legged and keeps his body erect and establishes mindfulness on the meditation object; only mindfully he breathes in and only mindfully he breathes out.

1. Breathing in a long breath he knows, "I am breathing in a long breath", or breathing out a long breath he knows, "I am breathing out a long breath".
2. Breathing in a short breath he knows, "I am breathing in a short breath", or breathing out a short breath he knows, "I am breathing out a short breath".
3. "Experiencing the whole breath body I will breathe in", thus he trains himself, and, "Experiencing the whole breath body I will breathe out", thus he trains himself.
4. "Calming the breath body I will breathe in", thus he trains himself, and, "Calming the breath body I will breathe out", thus he trains himself.'

To begin meditating, sit in a comfortable position and try to be aware of the breath as it enters and leaves the body through the nostrils. You should be able to feel it either just below the nose or somewhere around the nostrils. Do not follow the breath inside the body or outside the body. Just be aware of the breath at the place where it brushes against and touches either the top of the upper lip or around the nostrils. If you follow the breath in and out, you will not be able to perfect your concentration, but if you keep aware of the breath at the most obvious place it touches, either the upper lip or around the nostrils, you will be able to develop and perfect your concentration.

Do not pay attention to the individual characteristics *(sabhāva-lakkhaṇa),* general characteristics *(sammañña-lakkhaṇa)* or the colour of the nimitta[1] (the sign of concentration). The individual characteristics are the natural characteristics of the four elements in the breath: hardness, roughness, flowing, heat, supporting, pushing, etc. The general characteristics are the impermanent *(anicca),* suffering *(dukkha),* or non-self *(anatta)* characteristics of the breath. This means do not note 'in, out, impermanent', or 'in, out, suffering', or 'in, out, non-self'.

Simply be aware of the in-and-out-breath as a concept. The concept of the breath is the object of mindfulness-of-breathing. It is this object to which you must direct your attention in order to develop concentration. As you pay attention to the concept of the breath in this way, and if you have practised this meditation in a previous life and have developed some pāramīs, you will easily be able to concentrate on the in-and-out-breath.

If your mind does not easily concentrate on the in-and-out-breath, the Visuddhimagga suggests to count the breaths. This will aid you to develop concentration. You should count after the end of each breath: 'In, out, one – In, out, two – In, out, three – In, out, four – In, out, five – In, out, six – In, out, seven – In, out, eight.'

You should count up to at least five, and not count up to more than ten. But we encourage you to count to eight, because it reminds you of the Noble Eightfold Path, which you are trying to develop. So you should count, as you like, up to any number between five and ten, and should determine in your mind that during that time you will not let your mind drift or go somewhere else. You want to simply be calmly aware of the breath. When you count like this, you find that you are able to concentrate your mind, and make it calmly aware of only the breath.

---

[1] 'For untranslated Pāḷi terms, please refer to Appendix 1.

After you can concentrate your mind like this for at least half an hour, you should proceed to the second stage which is:

1. 'Breathing in a long breath he knows, "I am breathing in a long breath", or breathing out a long breath he knows, "I am breathing out a long breath".
2. 'Breathing in a short breath he knows, "I am breathing in a short breath", breathing out a short breath he knows, "I am breathing out a short breath".'

At this stage you have to develop awareness of whether the in and out breaths are long or short. Long or short here do not refer to length in feet and inches, but length of time. It is the duration. You should decide for yourself what length of time you will call long, and what length of time you will call short. Be aware of the duration of each in-and-out-breath. You will notice that sometimes the breath is long in time, and sometimes short. Just knowing this is all you have to do at this stage. You should not note, 'In, out, long – In, out, short', but just note 'In, out', and be aware of whether the breaths are long or short. You should know this by just being aware of the length of time that the breath brushes and touches the upper lip, or around the nostrils, as it enters and leaves the body. Sometimes the breath may be long throughout the sitting, and sometimes it may be short throughout the sitting. But you should not purposely try to make it long or short.

For some meditators at this stage the nimitta may appear, but if you can do this calmly for about one hour and no nimitta appears, you should move on to the third stage:

3. '"Experiencing the whole breath body I will breathe in", thus he trains himself and, "Experiencing the whole breath body I will breathe out", thus he trains himself.'

Here the Buddha is instructing you to be aware of the whole breath continuously from beginning to end. You are training your mind to be thus continuously aware of the breath from beginning to end. As you are doing this the nimitta may appear. If the nimitta appears you should not immediately shift your attention to it, but continue to be aware of the breath.

If you are continuously and calmly aware of the breath from beginning to end for about one hour, and no nimitta appears you should move on to the fourth stage:

4. '"Calming the breath body I will breathe in", thus he trains himself and, "Calming the breath body I will breathe out", thus he trains himself.'

To do this you should decide to make the breath calm, and go on being continuously aware of the breath from beginning to end. You should do nothing else to make the breath calm, because if you do you will find that your concentration will break and fall away. There are four factors given in the Visuddhimagga that make the breath calm. They are: reflecting *(ābhoga),* bringing to mind *(samannāhāra),* attending *(manasikāra),* and deciding *(vīmaṃsa).* So all you need to do at this stage is to decide to calm the breath, and to be continuously aware of the breath. Practising in this way, you will find that the breath becomes calmer and the nimitta may appear.

Just before the nimitta appears a lot of meditators encounter difficulties. Mostly they find that the breath becomes very subtle, and is not clear to their mind. If this happens, you should keep your awareness at the place where you last noticed the breath, and wait for it there.

You should reflect on the fact that you are not a person who is not breathing, but that you are in fact breathing, and it is your mindfulness which is not strong enough to be aware of the breath. A dead person, a foetus in the womb, a drowned person, an unconscious person, a person in the fourth jhāna, a person experiencing attainment of cessation *(nirodha-samāpatti)* (an attainment in which consciousness, mental-concomitants, and materiality produced by consciousness are suspended), and a brahmā: only these seven types of people do not breathe, and you are not one of them. So you are breathing, but you are simply not mindful enough to be aware of it.

When it is subtle, you should not try to change the breath and make it more obvious, because of agitation produced by excessive effort. If you do so you will not develop in concentration. Just be aware of the breath as it is, and if it is not clear simply wait for it at the place where you last noticed it. You will find that as you apply your mindfulness and understanding in this way the breath will reappear.

The appearance of the nimitta produced by developing mindfulness-of-breathing is not the same for everyone, but varies according to the individual. To some people it appears as a pleasant sensation like:

1. Cotton wool *(uggaha-nimitta),*
2. Drawn out cotton *(uggaha-nimitta),*
3. Moving air or a draught *(uggaha-nimitta),*
4. A bright light like the morning star Venus *(uggaha nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
5. A bright ruby or gem *(paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
6. A bright pearl *(paṭibhāga-nimitta).*

To some people it appears as a coarse sensation like:

1. The stem of a cotton plant *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
2. A sharpened piece of wood *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*

To some people it appears like:

1. A long rope or string *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
2. A wreath of flowers *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
3. A puff of smoke *(uggaha-nimitta* and *patibhāga-nimitta),*
4. A stretched out spiders web *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
5. A film of mist *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
6. A lotus *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
7. A chariot wheel *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimiṭta),*
8. A moon *(uggaha-nimitta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta),*
9. A sun *(uggaha-nimiṭta* and *paṭibhāga-nimitta).*

In most cases a pure white nimitta like cotton wool is the uggaha-nimitta (taken-up sign or learning sign), because the uggaha-nimitta is usually not clear and bright. When the nimitta becomes bright like the morning star, brilliant and clear, it is the paṭibhāga-nimitta (counterpart sign). When the nimitta is like a ruby or gem and not bright, it is the uggaha-nimitta, but when it is bright and sparkling, it is the paṭibhāga-nimitta. The rest of the images and colours should be understood in the same way.

The nimitta appears to different people in different ways because it is produced by perception. The different perceptions of different meditators before the arising of the nimitta produces different types of nimitta. Even though mindfulness-of-breathing is a single meditation subject, it produces various types of nimitta, depending on the individual.

When you have reached this stage it is important not to play with your nimitta. Do not let it go away, and do not intentionally change its shape or appearance. If you do this your concentration will not develop any further, and your progress will stop. Your nimitta will probably disappear. So at this point, when your nimitta first appears, do not move your concentration from the breath to the nimitta. If you do you will find it disappears.

If you find that the nimitta is stable and your mind on its own has become fixed on it, then just leave your mind there. If you force your mind to come away from it, you will probably lose your concentration.

If your nimitta appears far away in front of you, do not pay attention to it, as it will probably disappear. If you do not pay attention to it and simply continue to concentrate on the breath at the place where the breath touches, you will find that the nimitta will come and stay at that place.

If your nimitta appears at the place where the breath touches, and the nimitta is stable, and appears as if it is the breath itself, and the breath appears as if it is the nimitta, then you can forget about the breath, and just be aware of the nimitta. In this way, by moving your attention from the breath to the nimitta, you will be able to make further progress. As you keep your mind on the nimitta, you will find that it becomes whiter and whiter, and when it is white like cotton wool it is the uggaha-nimitta.

You should determine to keep your mind calmly concentrated on that white uggaha-nimitta for one hour, two hours, three hours, etc. If you are able to keep your mind fixed on the uggaha-nimitta for one or two hours, you should find that it becomes clear, bright, and brilliant. This is then the paṭibhāga-nimitta (counterpart sign). At this point you should determine and practise keeping your mind fixed on the paṭibhāga-nimitta for one hour, two hours, or three hours. Practise until you succeed.

At this stage you will reach either access *(upacāra)* or absorption *(appanā)* concentration. Access concentration is the concentration close to and preceding jhāna. Absorption concentration is the concentration of jhāna.

Both these types of concentration have the paṭibhāga-nimitta as their object. The difference between them is that in access concentration the jhāna factors are not developed to full strength. For this reason during access concentration bhavaṅga mind states still occur and one can fall into bhavaṅga (life-continuum consciousness). The meditator experiences this, and will say that everything stopped, and he may even think this is Nibbāna. In reality the mind has not stopped, but the meditator just does not have sufficient skill to discern this, because of the subtlety of those bhavaṅga mind states.

To avoid dropping into bhavaṅga, and to develop further, you need the help of the five controlling faculties of faith *(saddhā),* effort *(vīriya),* mindfulness *(sati),* concentration *(samādhi),* and understanding *(paññā)* to push the mind and fix it on the paṭibhāga-nimitta. It takes effort to make the mind know the paṭibhāga-nimitta again and again, mindfulness not to forget the paṭibhāga-nimitta, and understanding to know the paṭibhāga-nimitta.

Balancing the Five Controlling Faculties

The five controlling faculties are the five powers that control the mind, and keep it from straying off the path of Samatha (tranquillity) and Vipassanā (insight) that leads to Nibbāna.

Of those five, the first is the faith in what one should have faith in, such as the Triple Gem, or faith in kamma and its results. It is important to believe in the enlightenment of the Buddha because if a person does not have such faith he will regress from the work of meditation. It is also important to have faith in the teachings of the Buddha, namely the Four Paths, the Four Fruits, Nibbāna, and the Teaching. The teachings of the Buddha show us the way of meditation, so at this stage it is important to have complete faith in that teaching.

Let us say the meditator thinks, 'Can jhāna really be attained by just watching the in-breath and out-breath? Is what has been said about the uggaha-nimitta being like white cotton wool, the paṭibhāga-nimitta being like clear ice or glass, really true?' If these kinds of thought persist they will result in views such as, 'Jhāna cannot be attained in the present age,' and then because of that view the meditator will decline in faith in the teaching, and will not be able to stop himself from giving up the development of Samatha.

So a person who is developing concentration with a meditation subject like mindfulness-of-breathing needs to have strong faith. He should develop mindfulness-of-breathing without any doubts. He should think, 'Jhāna can be achieved if I follow the instructions of the Fully Enlightened Buddha systematically.'

If, however, a person lets his faith concerning the objects that he should have faith in become excessive, and here we are talking about the meditation subject of mindfulness-of-breathing, then because of the function of faith, namely, to decide about an object, is in excess, the faculty of wisdom is not clear, and the remaining faculties of effort, mindfulness, and concentration are also weakened. At that time the faculty of effort is not able to perform its function of raising associated mental formations[2] to the paṭibhāga-nimitta, and keeping them there. Also mindfulness will not be able to perform its function of establishing knowledge of the paṭibhāga-nimitta. The faculty of concentration will not be able to perform its function of preventing the mind from going to an object other than the paṭibhāga-nimitta. The faculty of wisdom will not be able to perform its function of seeing penetratively the paṭibhāga-nimitta. Because of the inability of wisdom to understand the paṭibhāga-nimitta, and support the faculty of faith, faith decreases.

If the faculty of effort is too strong, the remaining faculties of faith, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom will again not be able to perform their respective functions of decision, establishment, absence of distraction, and penetrative discernment. Thus excessive effort causes the mind not to stay calmly concentrated on the paṭibhāga-nimitta, and this means the enlightenment factors of tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity do not arise with sufficient strength.

In the same way, one should know that when the controlling faculties of concentration and wisdom are in excess, that too will have detrimental effects.

The balancing of faith with wisdom, and concentration with effort, is praised by the wise. If, for instance, faith is strong and wisdom is weak then a person will develop faith in, and respect for objects that are useless and without essence. For instance, they will develop faith in, and reverence for objects that are respected and revered by religions outside the orthodox Buddhism. For example, faith in and reverence for Guardian Spirits or Protective Deities.

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[2] Mental formations include both consciousness and its mental-concomitants.

If, on the other hand, wisdom is strong and faith is weak, a person can become quite crafty. Without meditating, they will spend their time simply passing judgements and making evaluations. It is as difficult to cure this as it is to cure a disease caused by an overdose of medicine.

If, however, faith and wisdom are balanced, a person will have faith in objects that he should have faith in. He will have faith in the Triple Gem, and in kamma and its effects. He will believe that if he meditates, in accordance with the instructions of the Buddha, he will be able to attain the paṭibhāga-nimitta, and jhāna. If he meditates with faith such as this, and is able to discern the paṭibhāga-nimitta with wisdom, his faith and wisdom will be balanced.

Again, if concentration is strong and effort is weak, then because of the tendency of concentration to produce laziness, laziness can overcome the mind. If effort is strong, and concentration is weak, then because of the tendency of effort to produce agitation, agitation can overcome the mind. So when concentration and effort are balanced, the mind will neither fall into laziness, nor fall into agitation, and will be able to attain jhāna.

When a person wishes to cultivate a Samatha subject it is good to have very strong faith. If a person thinks, 'I will certainly reach jhāna if I develop concentration on the paṭibhāga-nimitta', then by the power of that faith, and by concentrating on the paṭibhāga-nimitta, he will definitely achieve jhāna. This is because jhāna is based primarily on concentration.

For a person developing Vipassanā it is good that wisdom be strong, because when wisdom is strong he will be able to see the three characteristics penetratively, and acquire knowledge that realizes the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

When concentration and wisdom are balanced, mundane jhāna *(lokiya jhāna)* can arise. Because the Buddha taught to develop Samatha and Vipassanā together, supramundane jhāna *(lokuttara-jhāna)* can also only arise when concentration and wisdom are balanced.

Mindfulness is always necessary to balance faith with wisdom, concentration with effort, and concentration with wisdom. Mindfulness is desirable under all circumstances, because mindfulness protects the mind from becoming agitated due to excess faith, effort, or wisdom. Mindfulness also protects the mind from falling into laziness because of excess concentration.

So mindfulness is necessary under all circumstances as is the seasoning of salt in all sauces, as a prime minister for all the king's affairs. Hence it says in the ancient commentaries that the Blessed One said, 'Mindfulness is always necessary in any meditation subject.' Why is that? It is because mindfulness is a refuge and protection for the meditating mind. Mindfulness is a refuge because it helps the mind arrive at special and high states it has never reached or known before. Without mindfulness the mind is not capable of attaining any special and extraordinary states. Mindfulness protects the mind and keeps the object of meditation from being lost. That is why to one discerning it, with insight-knowledge, mindfulness appears as that which protects the object of meditation, as well as the mind of the meditator. Without mindfulness a person is unable to lift up the mind or restrain the mind. That is why the Buddha has said it is useful in all instances. (See also Vsm Ch. IV, para. 49. Mahāṭīkā 1, 150–154.)

Balancing the Seven Factors of Enlightenment

If one is to achieve jhāna using mindfulness-of-breathing, it is also important to balance the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. They are:

1. The Enlightenment Factor of Mindfulness *(sati),* which is the mindfulness that remembers the paṭibhāga-nimitta, and discerns it again and again.
2. The Enlightenment Factor of Investigation of Phenomena *(dhammavicaya),* which is the penetrative understanding of the paṭibhāga-nimitta.
3. The Enlightenment Factor of Effort *(vīriya),* which is the effort to bring the enlightenment factors together, and balance them on the paṭibhāga-nimitta; especially the effort to further strengthen the Enlightenment Factor of Investigation of Phenomena, and the Enlightenment Factor of Effort itself.
4. The Enlightenment Factor of Joy *(pīti),* which is the gladness of the mind when experiencing the paṭibhāga-nimitta.
5. The Enlightenment Factor of Tranquillity *(passaddhi),* which is the calmness of the mind and mental-concomitants that have the paṭibhāga-nimitta as their object.
6. The Enlightenment Factor of Concentration *(samādhi),* which is the one-pointedness of the mind on the paṭibhāga-nimitta.
7. The Enlightenment Factor of Equanimity *(upekkhā),* which is the evenness of mind that becomes neither excited nor withdrawn from the paṭibhāga-nimitta.

A meditator must develop and balance all seven enlightenment factors. However, with insufficient effort, the mind of the meditator will fall away from the object of meditation, which in this case is the paṭibhāga-nimitta. Then one should not develop the three enlightenment factors of tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity, but instead develop the three enlightenment factors of investigation of phenomena, effort, and joy. In this way the mind is raised up again.

Likewise, when there is too much effort the mind will become agitated and distracted. Then one should not develop the three enlightenment factors of investigation of phenomena, effort, and joy, but should instead develop the three enlightenment factors of tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. In this way the agitated and distracted mind will become restrained and calmed.

This is how the five controlling faculties and seven factors of enlightenment are balanced.

Attaining Jhāna

When those five controlling faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and understanding are sufficiently developed, concentration will go beyond access up to absorption concentration. When you reach jhāna in this way your mind will know the paṭibhāga-nimitta without interruption. This can continue for several hours, even all night, or for a whole day.

When your mind stays continuously concentrated on the paṭibhāga-nimitta for one or two hours, you should try to discern the area in the heart where the mind-door (bhavaṅga consciousness) rests, that is the heart-base materiality. The bhavaṅga consciousness is bright and luminous, and the commentaries explain that it is the mind-door *(manodvāra).* If you practise this many times, again and again, you will easily be able to discern both the mind-door dependent on the heart-base materiality, and the paṭibhāga-nimitta as it appears there. When you can do this, you should try to discern the five jhāna factors of applied thought, sustained thought, joy, happiness, and one-pointedness, one at a time. Eventually with continued practice, you will be able to discern them all together at once. The five jhāna factors are:

1. Applied thought *(vitakka):* directing and placing the mind on the paṭibhāga-nimitta.
2. Sustained thought *(vicāra):* maintaining the mind on the paṭibhāga-nimitta.
3. Joy *(pīti):* liking for the paṭibhāga-nimitta.
4. Bliss *(sukha):* pleasant feeling or happiness associated with experiencing the paṭibhāga-nimitta.
5. One-pointedness *(ekaggatā):* one-pointedness of mind on the paṭibhāga-nimitta.

Each of the individual jhāna factor is on its own called a jhāna factor, but when taken as a group they are called jhāna. When you are just beginning to practise jhāna, you should practise to enter jhāna for a long time, and not spend too much time discerning the jhāna factors. You should practise mastery *(vasībhāva)* of the first jhāna. There are five kinds of mastery:

1. Mastery in adverting; being able to discern the jhāna factors after emerging from jhāna.
2. Mastery in attaining; being able to enter jhāna whenever you wish.
3. Mastery in resolving; being able to stay in jhāna for as long as you have determined to stay.
4. Mastery in emerging; being able to leave the jhāna at the time you determined to emerge.

5. Mastery in reviewing; being able to discern the jhāna factors.

Adverting and reviewing both occur in the same mind-door thought-process *(manodvāra-vīthi).* Adverting is performed by the mind-door adverting consciousness *(manodvārā-vajjana),* which in this case takes as its object one of the five jhāna factors such as applied thought. Reviewing is performed by the four, five, six, or seven reviewing impulsion consciousnesses that occur immediately after the mind-door adverting consciousness, and which have the same object.

It says in the Pabbateyyagāvī Sutta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, that once the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna, still only a stream-enterer, was practising to attain jhāna. The Buddha warned him not to try to progress to the second jhāna before having become skilled in the mastery of the first jhāna. He explained that if one does not master the first jhāna thoroughly, but tries to go to higher jhānas, one will miss the first jhāna as well as be unable to attain the second jhāna. One will miss both jhānas.

When you have become proficient in these five masteries of the first jhāna, you can try to progress to the second jhāna. To do this you need to enter into the first jhāna, emerge from it, and reflect on the faults of the first jhāna, and advantages of the second jhāna. You should consider that the first jhāna is close to the five hindrances. You should also consider that the jhāna factors of applied thought and sustain thought in the first jhāna are gross, and make it less calm than the second jhāna which is without them. So, wanting to remove these two jhāna factors, to be left with just joy, happiness, and one-pointedness, you should again apply your mind to concentrating on the paṭibhāga-nimitta. In this way you will be able to attain the second jhāna, possessed of those three factors, joy, bliss, and one-pointedness.

You should then practise the five masteries of the second jhāna, and when you have succeeded and want to develop the third jhāna, you should reflect on the faults of the second jhāna, and advantages of the third jhāna. That is the second jhāna is close to the first jhāna, and the third jhāna is calmer than the second jhāna. You should also consider that the jhāna factor of joy in the second jhāna is gross, and makes it less calm than the third jhāna, which is without joy. Reflecting in this way, after arising from the second jhāna, you should develop a desire to attain the third jhāna, and again concentrate on the paṭibhāga-nimitta. In this way you will be able to attain the third jhāna, possessed of happiness and one-pointedness.

You should then practise the five masteries of the third jhāna, and when you have succeeded and want to develop the fourth jhāna you should reflect on the faults of the third jhāna and advantages of the fourth jhāna. You should consider that the jhāna factor of happiness in the third jhāna is gross, and makes it less calm than the fourth jhāna, which is without happiness. Reflecting in this way, after arising from the third jhāna, you should develop a desire to attain the fourth jhāna, and again concentrate on the paṭibhāga-nimitta. In this way you will be able to attain the fourth jhāna, possessed of equanimity and one-pointedness. You should then practise the five masteries of the fourth jhāna.

With the attainment of the fourth jhāna the breath stops completely. This completes the fourth stage in the development of mindfulness-of-breathing *(ānāpānassati)*:

4. '"Calming the breath body I will breathe in", thus he trains himself, and, "Calming the breath body I will breathe out",

thus he trains himself.’

This stage began just before the nimitta appeared, and as concentration developed through the four jhānas, the breath became progressively calmer and calmer until it stopped in the fourth jhāna.

When a meditator has reached the fourth jhāna by using mindfulness-of-breathing, and has developed the five masteries, then when the light produced by that concentration is bright, brilliant and radiant, he can, if he wishes, move on to develop Vipassanā meditation. The meditator can on the other hand continue to develop Samatha meditation.

Part 2

How to Develop Four-Elements Meditation

In the Pāḷi texts there are two ways for developing the four-elements meditation, in brief and in detail. The brief method which will be explained here is meant for those of quick understanding. The detailed method is meant for those who have difficulty with the brief method. The Buddha taught the brief method in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta:

'A bhikkhu reviews this very body however it be positioned or placed as consisting of just elements thus, "There are in this body just the earth-element, the water-element, the fire-element, and the air-element."'

The Visuddhimagga (Ch.XI, para. 41–43) explains further:

'So firstly, one of quick understanding who wants to develop this meditation should go into solitary retreat. Then he should advert to his entire material body, and discern the elements in brief in this way, "In this body what is hard or rough is the earth-element, what is flowing or cohesion is the water-element, what is maturing (ripening) or heat is the fire-element, what is pushing or supporting is the air-element," and he should advert and give attention to it and review it again and again as "earth-element, water-element, fire-element, air-element," that is to say, as mere elements, not a being, and soulless. As he makes effort in this way it is not long before concentration arises in him, which is reinforced by understanding that illuminates the classification of the elements, and which is only access and does not reach absorption because it has states with individual essences as its object.

'Or alternatively, there are these four [bodily] parts mentioned by the Elder Sāriputta for the purpose of showing the absence of any living being in the four great primary elements thus:

"When a space is enclosed with bones, sinews, flesh, and skin there comes to be the term material form *(rūpa)"* (M. I. p. 190). And he should resolve each of these, separating them out by the hand of knowledge, and then discern in the way already stated thus (above): "In these what is hardness… as its objects."'

As taught at Pa-Auk Meditation Centre, discern in the whole body:

1. Earth-element: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness.
2. Water-element: flowing, cohesion.
3. Fire-element: heat, coldness.
4. Air-element: supporting, pushing.

To learn this meditation, you must begin by learning how to discern each of the twelve qualities or characteristics of the four elements one at a time. Usually the beginner must be taught the characteristics which are easier to discern first, and the more difficult ones later. They are usually taught in this order: pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness, smoothness, lightness, heat, coldness, flowing, cohesion. Each characteristic must be discerned first in one place in the body, and then one must try discern it throughout the body.

1. To discern pushing, you may begin by being aware, through the sense of touch, of the pushing in the centre of the head as you breathe in and breathe out. When you can discern the characteristic of pushing, you should concentrate on it until it becomes clear to your mind. Then you should move your awareness to another part of the body nearby, and look for pushing there. In this way you will slowly be able to discern pushing first in the head, then the neck, the trunk of the body, the arms, and the legs and feet. You must do this again

and again, many times, until wherever you place your awareness in the body you can easily see pushing.

If the pushing of the breath in the centre of the head is not easy to discern, then try being aware of pushing as the chest expands when breathing, or as the abdomen moves. If these are not clear, try to discern the pulse beat as the heart pumps, or any other obvious form of pushing. Wherever there is movement there is also pushing. Wherever you begin, you must continue to slowly develop your understanding so that you can discern pushing throughout the body. In some places it will be obvious, and in other places subtle, but it is present everywhere throughout the body.

2. When you are satisfied that you can do this, try to discern hardness. Begin by discerning hardness in the teeth. Bite your teeth together and feel how hard they are. Then relax your bite and feel the hardness of the teeth. When you can feel this, try to discern hardness throughout the body in a systematic way from head to feet, in the same way as you did to discern pushing. Care should be taken to not deliberately tense the body.

When you can discern hardness throughout the body, again look for pushing throughout the body. Alternate between these two, pushing and hardness, again and again, discerning pushing throughout the body, and then hardness throughout the body, from head to feet. Repeat this process many times until you are satisfied that you can do it.

3. When you can discern pushing and hardness, try to discern roughness. Rub your tongue over the edge of your teeth, or brush your hand over the skin of your arm, and feel roughness. Now try to discern roughness throughout the body in a systematic way as before. If you cannot feel roughness, try looking at pushing and hardness again, and you may discern it with them.

When you can discern roughness, continue to discern pushing, hardness, roughness, one at a time, again and again, throughout the body from head to feet.

4. When you are satisfied that you can discern those three characteristics, look for heaviness throughout the body. Begin by placing one hand on top of the other in your lap, and feel that the top hand is heavy, or feel the heaviness of the head by bending it forward. Practise systematically until you can discern heaviness throughout the body. Then continue to look for the four characteristics: pushing, hardness, roughness, and heaviness, in turn throughout the body.

5. When you are satisfied that you can discern those four characteristics, look for supporting throughout the body. Begin by relaxing your back so that your body bends forward. Then straighten your body and keep it straight and erect. The force which keeps the body straight, still, and erect is supporting. Practise systematically until you can discern supporting throughout the body from head to feet. If you have difficulty in doing this, you can try to discern supporting together with hardness as this can make it easier to discern supporting. Then when you can discern supporting easily, you should look for pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, and supporting throughout the body.

6. When you can discern these five, look for softness by pressing your tongue against the inside of your lip to feel its softness. Then relax your body and practise systematically until you can discern softness throughout the body. You can now look for pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, and softness throughout the body.

7. Next look for smoothness by wetting your lips and rubbing your tongue over them from side to side. Practise as above until you can discern smoothness throughout the body. Then look

for the seven characteristics throughout the body, one at a time.

8. Next look for lightness by wagging a single finger up and down, and feeling its lightness. Practise until you can discern lightness throughout the body, and then look for the eight characteristics as explained before.

9. Next look for heat (or warmth) throughout the body. This is usually very easy to do. You can now discern nine characteristics.

10. Next look for coldness by feeling the coldness of the breath as it enters the nostrils, and then discern it systematically throughout the body. You can now discern ten characteristics.

Note: The above ten characteristics are all known directly through the sense of touch, but the last two characteristics, flowing and cohesion, are known by inference based upon the other ten characteristics. That is a good reason to teach them last.

11. To discern cohesion, be aware of how the body is being held together by the skin, flesh, and sinews. The blood is being held in by the skin, like water in a balloon. Without cohesion the body would fall into separate pieces and particles. The force of gravity which keeps the body stuck to the earth is also cohesion. Develop it as before.

12. To discern flowing begin by being aware of the flowing of saliva into the mouth, the flowing of blood through the blood vessels, the flowing of air into the lungs, or the flowing of heat throughout the body. Develop it as before.

If you experience difficulty in trying to discern flowing or cohesion, you should discern the previous ten qualities again and again, one at a time throughout the body. When you have become skilled in this, you will find that the quality of cohesion also becomes clear. If cohesion still does not become clear, then pay attention again and again to just the qualities of pushing and hardness. Eventually you should feel as if the whole body is wrapped up in the coils of a rope. Discern this as the quality of cohesion. If the quality of flowing does not become clear, then look at it with the quality of coldness, heat, or pushing, and you should then be able to discern the quality of flowing.

When you can discern all twelve characteristics clearly throughout the body, from head to feet, you should continue to discern them again and again in this same order. When you are satisfied that you can do this, you should rearrange the order to the one first given above, which was: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, coldness, supporting, and pushing. In that order try to discern each characteristic, one at a time from head to feet. You should try to develop this until you can do it quite quickly, at least three rounds in a minute.

While practising in this way, the elements will for some meditators not be balanced, some elements may become excessive and unbearable. Particularly hardness, heat, and pushing can become excessively strong. If this occurs, you should pay more attention to the quality opposite the one that is in excess, and continue to develop concentration in that way. You may find that this will balance the elements again, and it is for this reason twelve characteristics were taught in the first place. When the elements are balanced it is easier to attain concentration.

For balancing the elements the opposites are: hardness and softness, roughness and smoothness, heaviness and lightness, flowing and cohesion, heat and coldness, and supporting and pushing.

If one member of these pairs is in excess, balance it by paying attention to its opposite. For example, if flowing is in excess pay more attention to cohesion, or if supporting is in excess pay more attention to pushing. The rest can be treated in a similar way.

Having now become skilled in the discernment of the twelve characteristics in the whole body, and those characteristics having become clear, you should note the first six together at one glance as the earth-element, the next two together at one glance as the water-element, the next two as the fire-element, and the last two as the air-element. You should continue to discern earth, water, fire, and air, in order to calm the mind and attain concentration. You should do this again and again hundreds, thousands, or millions of times.

At this point, a good method to use is to take an overview of the body all at once and to continue to perceive the four elements. In order to keep the mind calm and concentrated, you should not move the awareness from one part of the body to another as before. Instead take an overall view of the body. It is usually best to take the overview as if you were looking from behind the shoulders. It can also be done as if looking from above the head down, but this may lead to tension and imbalance of the elements in some meditators.

The sub-commentary to Visuddhimagga also says to develop concentration by giving attention in ten ways: in order, not too fast, not too slow, warding off distractions, going beyond the concept, discarding what is not clear, discerning the characteristics, and developing according to the Adhicitta Sutta, Anuttarasītibhāva Sutta, and Bojjhaṅga Sutta.

1. In order *(anupubbato)*

The order refers to the order taught by the Buddha, which is earth, water, fire, and air.

2. Not too fast *(nātisīghato)*
3. Not too slow *(nātisaṇikato)*

If you note too fast, the four elements, which are the object of this meditation, will not be seen clearly. If you note too slowly you will not reach the end of the meditation.

4. Warding off distractions *(vikkhepapaṭibāhanato)*

You should be sure to keep the mind with the object of meditation only, the four elements, and to not let it wander off to other objects.

5. Going beyond the concept *(paññattisamatikkamanato)*

You should not just mentally recite, 'earth, water, fire, air', but be aware of the actual realities they represent: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, coldness, supporting, and pushing.

6. Discarding what is unclear *(anupaṭṭhānamuñcanato)*

When you can discern all twelve characteristics, and are trying to develop calmness and concentration, you may temporarily leave out those characteristics which are unclear. This is not advisable if it leads to pain or tension because of an imbalance of the elements. You need also to keep at least one characteristic for each one of the four elements. You cannot just work on three, two, or one element. If all twelve characteristics are clear that is the best, and you should not discard any.

7. Discerning the characteristics *(lakkhaṇato)*

When you begin to meditate, and the natural characteristics of each element are not clear, you can also pay attention to their function. When the concentration gets better, you should concentrate on the natural characteristics *(sabhāva-lakkhaṇa)* of each of the four elements; the hardness and roughness of the earth-element, the flowing and cohesion of the water-element, the heat and coldness of the fire-element, and the supporting of the air-element. At this point you will see only elements, and see them as not a person or self.

8–9–10. The sub-commentary further recommends to develop according to the (8) Adhicitta Sutta, (9) Anuttarasītibhāva Sutta, and (10) Bojjhaṅga Sutta. These three suttas advise balancing the five faculties *(indriya)* of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and understanding; and balancing the seven factors of enlightenment.

As you continue to develop concentration based upon the four elements, and begin to approach access concentration *(upacāra-samādhi),* you will see different kinds of light. For some meditators the light begins as a smoke-like grey. If you continue to discern the four elements in this grey light, it will become whiter like cotton wool, and then bright white, like clouds. At this point, your whole body will appear as a white form. You should continue to concentrate on discerning the four elements in the white form, and you will find it becomes transparent like a block of ice or glass.

This transparent materiality is the five sensitivities *(pasāda)* and these we call 'transparent-elements'. Of these five transparent-elements, the body transparent-element *(kāya-pasāda)* is found throughout the body. When at this stage the body transparent-element, eye transparent-element, ear transparentelement, nose transparent-element, and tongue transparent-element are seen as a transparent lump or block. This is because you have not yet removed the three kinds of compactness *(ghana).*

If you continue to discern the four elements in that transparent lump or block, you will find that it sparkles and emits light. When you can concentrate on this light continuously at least half an hour, you have reached access concentration. With that light try to discern the space-element in that transparent form, by looking for small spaces in it. You will find that the transparent form breaks down into small particles which are called rūpa kalāpas. Having reached this stage, which is purification of mind *(citta-visuddhi),* you can proceed to develop purification of view *(diṭṭhi-visuddhi),* by analysing these rūpa kalāpas.

That access concentration is the resting place for bare-insight meditators who have no previous Samatha jhāna, as they start their practice directly with the four-elements meditation. If tiredness occurs during Vipassanā, they can rest in this access concentration, just as the Samatha meditator rests in jhāna. Then they emerge clear and refreshed again for Vipassanā.

The use of jhāna as a resting place is explained by a simile in the commentary to the Dvedhāvitakka Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya. Sometimes during a battle, the warriors would feel tired. Also, the enemy might be strong. At that time many arrows would be flying. The warriors, feeling some weakness, would retreat to their fort. Behind its walls they were safe from the enemy's arrows. They would rest and their tiredness would gradually disappear. Then, feeling strong and powerful again, they would leave their fort and return to the battle field. Similarly, jhāna is just like the fort, a resting place for Vipassanā meditation. There is much to discern in Vipassanā meditation; so, meditators greatly benefit from having a resting place.

How to Analyse Rūpa Kalāpas

The rūpa kalāpas fall into two groups, those which are transparent and those which are opaque. Only the rūpa kalāpas which contain one of the five material transparent-elements *(pasāda rūpa)* are transparent. All other rūpa kalāpas are opaque.

You should first begin to practise discerning the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, in individual transparent and opaque rūpa kalāpas. You will probably find that the rūpa kalāpas arise and pass away very, very quickly. At this point, you will still not be able to analyse the rūpa kalāpas, because you still see the rūpa kalāpas as small particles with size. Since you have not yet removed the three kinds of compactness, compactness of continuity *(santati-ghana),* compactness of group *(samūha-ghana),* and compactness of function *(kicca-ghana),* you are still in the realm of concepts *(paññatti),* and have not yet arrived at ultimate reality *(paramattha).*

It is because you have not removed the concept of group and shape, there is the concept of a small lump or block remaining. If you do not analyse the elements *(dhātu)* further than this, but instead attempt to do Vipassanā by contemplating the arising and passing-away of these rūpa kalāpas, then you would be trying to do Vipassanā on concepts. So you must continue to analyse the elements further, until you can see them in single kalāpas: this is in order to reach ultimate reality.

If you are unable to discern the four elements in single kalāpas, because of their extremely fast arising and passing-away, you should ignore their arising and passing-away. It is just like pretending not to see or notice someone whom you do not want to meet, but have met by accident. Ignore the arising and passing-away; simply concentrate, and pay attention to the four elements in individual rūpa kalāpa, and stay aware of only that. It is the power of your concentration which allows you to ignore their arising and passing-away.

If you are still unsuccessful, you should pay attention to the earth-element alternately in the whole body at once, and then in a single kalāpa. Then pay attention to the water-element in the whole body at once, and in a single kalāpa. Then pay attention to the fire-element in the whole body at once, and in a single kalāpa. Then pay attention to the air-element in the whole body at once, and in a single kalāpa. If you practise in this way, you will be able to discern the four elements in the transparent rūpa kalāpas and opaque rūpa kalāpas.

When you have succeeded in this, discern the four elements in rūpa kalāpas of the eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base, body-base, and heart-base each in turn. Discern the four elements in both the transparent and opaque rūpa kalāpas of those six bases.

Each rūpa kalāpa contains at least eight types of materiality. They are: earth, water, fire, air, colour, odour, taste, and nutritive-essence. Therefore, after you have discerned the four elements in both the transparent and opaque rūpa kalāpas of the six sense-bases, you should also try to discern the colour, odour, taste, and nutritive-essence in those rūpa kalāpas.

Colour *(vaṇṇa)* is found in every rūpa kalāpa, and is the object of seeing *(rūpārammaṇa).* It is very easy to discern this kind of object.

Odour, or smell *(gandha)* is present in every rūpa kalāpa. You should begin by discerning both the nose transparent-element and the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element. To see these, you should discern the four elements in the nose, and then you will easily find the nose transparent-element. This nose transparent-element must be seen in the appropriate rūpa kalāpas in the nose.

If you have successfully discerned the four elements in the transparent kalāpas and opaque kalāpas of the six sense-bases, you will easily be able to discern the bright, luminous bhavaṅga mind transparent-element, the mind-door *(manodvāra).* It is located in the heart, and depends on the heart-base *(hadaya-vatthu),* which is made up of opaque kalāpas called heart-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpas or heart-decad kalāpas *(hadaya-dasaka-kalāpa).*

Having thus discerned the nose transparent-element and bhavaṅga mind transparent-element, proceed to discern the odour of a rūpa kalāpa which you have chosen to examine. Odour is a dhamma which can be known by either the nose consciousness or the mind consciousness. The nose consciousness arises resting on the nose transparent-element. The mind consciousness arises attracted by the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element which itself rests upon heart-base materiality. This is why when you wish to discern odour in rūpa kalāpas, both the transparent-elements of this process must be discerned.

Taste *(rasa)* is present in every rūpa kalāpa. Having discerned both the tongue transparent-element and bhavaṅga mind transparent-element, discern the taste of a rūpa kalāpa that you have chosen to examine. You can begin by discerning the taste of saliva which is on the tongue. As with the odour above, the taste of an object can be known by either the tongue consciousness or the mind consciousness. Both these elements must therefore be discerned.

The Abhidhamma Commentary (Abhi. Com. 2. p. 388) says: *'Sabbopi panesa pabhedo manodvārikajavaneyeva labhati.'* This explains that the colour, odour, and taste of a rūpa kalāpa, can be known by the mind consciousness alone. Before your meditation becomes strong, you use the nose and tongue consciousness to assist you to learn how taste and odour can be known by the mind consciousness. When your meditation is strong and powerful, you can know taste and odour of rūpa kalāpas by mind consciousness alone.

Nutritive-essence *(ojā)* is present in every rūpa kalāpa. It is of four types: nutritive-essence produced by kamma, consciousness *(citta),* temperature *(utu),* and nutriment *(āhāra).* Look inside any rūpa kalāpa and you will find the nutritive-essence. From this nutritive-essence, rūpa kalāpas are seen to multiply forth again and again.

After having discerned the basic eight kinds of materiality in rūpa kalāpas, you should try to discern the remaining types of materiality in specific rūpa kalāpas

Life-faculty *(jīvita)* is the materiality which sustains the life of materiality produced by kamma. It is not found in rūpa kalāpas produced by consciousness, temperature, or nutriment, but only in those produced by kamma. The transparent rūpa kalāpas are produced by kamma only, so this is where you should begin to look for it. You should discern the transparent rūpa kalāpas and then search for life-faculty in them. The life-faculty materiality sustains the life of other materiality in its own kalāpa, and not the materiality in other kalāpas.

After having discerned life-faculty in the transparent rūpa kalāpa, you should also try to discern it in the opaque rūpa kalāpa. There are three types of opaque kalāpa found in the body which contain life-faculty. One type, heart-decad kalāpas or heart-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpas *(hadaya-dasaka-kalāpa)* are found only in the heart. The other two, sex-decad kalāpas or sex-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpas *(bhāva-dasaka-kalāpa)* and life-nonad kalāpas or life-faculty-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpas *(jīvita-navaka-kalāpa),* are found throughout the body. Therefore, if you can discern life-faculty in an opaque kalāpa somewhere in the body besides the heart, you know it must be either a sex-decad kalāpa or life-nonad kalāpa. To tell these two apart you need to be able to discern sex-determining-materiality.

Sex-determining-materiality *(bhāva-rūpa)* is found in opaque kalāpas throughout the body, in all six sense-bases. After you have discerned life-faculty in both transparent and opaque kalāpas, you should look for sex-determining-materiality in the opaque kalāpa where you found life-faculty. If you find sex-determining-materiality the kalāpa, it is a sex-decad kalāpa *(bhāva-dasaka-kalāpa),* and not a life-nonad kalāpa *(jīvita-navaka-kalāpa).* In a male there is only male sex-determining-materiality, and in a female only female sex-determining-materiality. Male sex-determining-materiality is a quality by which you know, 'This is a man.' Female sex-determining-materiality is a quality by which you know, 'This is a woman.' When you are able to discern sex-determining-materiality, look for it in each of the six bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and heart.

Heart-base materiality *(hadaya-rūpa)* is the materiality which supports the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element (also called mind-element and mind-door), and mind-consciousness-element *(manoviññāṇa-dhātu).* The mind-consciousness-element includes all types of consciousness except the five sense consciousnesses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The heart-base is the place where the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element occur, and it has the characteristic of being the materiality on which they depend.

To discern the heart-base materiality, focus the mind on the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element. Then try to discern the rūpa kalāpas which support the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element. You should be able to find these rūpa kalāpas in the lower part of the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element. They are heart-decad kalāpas. They are opaque kalāpas and the heart-base materiality *(hadayavatthu-rūpa)* in them is the support for the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element.

How to Analyse the Transparent-Elements Materiality

The organ of the eye contains several kinds of rūpa kalāpa which are interspersed like rice flour and wheat flour mixed together. In the eye there are two kinds of transparent-element mixed together, the eye transparent-element and body transparent-element. This means that the eye-decad kalāpa or eye-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpa *(cakkhu-dasaka-kalāpa)* and body-decad kalāpa or body-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpa *(kāya-dasaka-kalāpa)* are interspersed. The body-decad kalāpas which contain body transparent-element are found spread throughout the six sense-bases. They are interspersed with the eye-decad kalāpas in the eye, with the ear-decad kalāpas *(sota-dasaka-kalāpa)* in the ear, with the nose-decad kalāpas *(ghāna-dasaka-kalāpa)* in the nose, with the tongue-decad kalāpas *(jivhā-dasaka-kalāpa)* in the tongue, and with the heart-decad kalāpas *(hadaya-dasaka-kalāpa)* in the heart. Sex-decad kalāpas are also spread throughout the six sense-bases, and are also interspersed with the transparent kalāpas. To be able to see this, you need to analyse the materiality of the transparent kalāpas.

(1) Eye transparent-element *(cakkhu pasāda):* The eye transparent-element is sensitive to the impingement of colour, whereas the body transparent-element is sensitive to the impingement of touch, or tangible objects. This difference in sensitivity to objects allows you to analyse and know which is the eye transparent-element, and which is the body transparent-element. First discern the four elements in the eye and discern the transparent rūpa kalāpa. Then look at the colour of a rūpa kalāpa that is a little far away from the eye. If you see that colour impinge on the transparent-element you chose to examine, it is an eye transparent-element, and the rūpa kalāpa which contains it is an eye-decad kalāpa *(cakkhu-dasaka-kalāpa).* If the colour does not impinge on the transparent-element you are looking at, it is not an eye transparent-element. It must be a body transparent-element because there are only two types of

transparent-element in the eye.

(2) Body transparent-element *(kāya pasāda):* The body transparent-element is sensitive to the impingement of tangible objects, which are the earth, fire, and air-elements. Discern the transparent rūpa kalāpa. Then look at the earth, fire, or air-element of a rūpa kalāpa that is nearby. If you see one of the three elements impinge on the transparent-element you chose to examine, it is a body transparent-element, and the rūpa kalāpa which contains it is a body-decad kalāpa *(kāya-dasaka-kalāpa).* In the same way as you did in the eye discern the body-decad kalāpas in the ear, nose, tongue, body, and heart.

(3) Ear transparent-element *(sota pasāda):* The ear transparent-element is sensitive to the impingement of sound. Discern the four elements in the ear and discern the transparent rūpa kalāpa. Then listen to a sound, and if you see it impinge on the transparent-element you chose to examine, it is an ear transparent-element, and the rūpa kalāpa which contains it is an ear-decad kalāpa *(sota-dasaka-kalāpa).* The discernment of the body-decad kalāpa follows the same method as shown above for the eye.

(4) Nose transparent-element *(ghāna pasāda):* The nose transparent-element is sensitive to the impingement of odour. Discern the four elements in the nose and discern the transparent rūpa kalāpa. Then smell the odour of a nearby rūpa kalāpa in the nose. If you see that odour impinge on the transparent-element, it is a nose transparent-element, and the rūpa kalāpa which contains it is a nose-decad kalāpa *(ghāna-dasaka-kalāpa).*

(5) Tongue transparent-element *(jivhā pasāda):* The tongue transparent-element is sensitive to the impingement of taste. Discern the four elements in the tongue and discern the transparent-element. Then taste the flavour of a rūpa kalāpa near it. If you see

it impinge on that transparent-element, it is a tongue transparent-element, and the rūpa kalāpa which contains it is a tongue-decad kalāpa *(jivhā-dasaka-kalāpa).*

The body-decad kalāpa and sex-decad kalāpa are found in all six sense-bases and must be seen in each place in turn.

The Fifty-Four Types of Materiality in the Eye

So, if you analyse the materiality in the eye you will find there are fifty-four kinds of materiality present in six types of rūpa kalāpa. The six types of rūpa kalāpa are:

1. The eye-decad kalāpa *(cakkhu-dasaka-kalāpa)* which is sensitive to the impingement of the colour of light, and is produced by kamma.
2. The body-decad kalāpa *(kāya-dasaka-kalāpa)* which is sensitive to the impingement of tangible objects (earth, fire, and air-elements), and is produced by kamma.
3. The sex-decad kalāpa *(bhāva-dasaka-kalāpa)* which is opaque and is produced by kamma.
4. The nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa or nutritive-essence-as-the-eighth-factor kalāpa *(cittaja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* which is opaque and produced by consciousness.
5. The nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* which is opaque and produced by temperature.
6. The nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* which is opaque and produced by nutriment.

I have already given examples of how to discern the first three of these six types of rūpa kalāpa. The last three are all rūpa kalāpas which consist of eight types of materiality. The only difference between them is their origin: consciousness, temperature, or nutriment. So I will now give examples of how to discern which of these rūpa kalāpas is produced by consciousness, which by temperature, and which by nutriment.

How to See Materiality Produced by Consciousness

All consciousnesses that occur depending on the heart-base materiality in the heart during one whole life are capable of producing consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa *(cittaja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* Every single mind produces a great number of these nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas, which spread throughout the body.

If you concentrate on the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element, you will see that many consciousnesses supported by the heart-base materiality continuously produce rūpa kalāpas. If this is not clear at first, then having concentrated on the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element, wiggle one of your fingers. You will see a large number of rūpa kalāpas being produced because of the mind wanting to move the finger. You will also see these rūpa kalāpas spread throughout all six sense-bases of the body, including the eye. These are the nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* which are opaque and produced by consciousness.

How to See Materiality Produced by Temperature

The fire-element in rūpa kalāpas produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature, or nutriment, is called temperature *(utu).* This fire-element is capable of producing new temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa),* which are the first generation produced by temperature. These temperature-produced nutritive-essence octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* also contain fire element, and can again produce more temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas, which are the second generation produced by temperature. If the fire-element is that which is present in a kamma-produced kalāpa, such as the eye-decad kalāpa, then this fire-element, which is temperature *(utu),* can in the same way produce four or five generations of temperature-produced kalāpas. This happens only when the temperature has reached its standing phase *(ṭhiti-kāla)*[3]. It is a law of materiality that it has strength only when it reaches its standing phase.

There is also consciousness-produced fire-element *(cittaja-utu)* which is temperature. When a normal sensual-realm consciousness causes the production of consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(cittaja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa),* these also contain fire-element which is temperature. This temperature can also produce temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* (first generation from consciousness-produced fire-element). These temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas also contain fire-element which can produce a further generation of temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* This process can carry on for two or three generations.

The consciousnesses present during the practice of preparatory, access, and absorption concentration in Samatha meditation, or during the practice of Vipassanā, and the path and fruition consciousnesses are all capable of producing consciousness-produced rūpa kalāpas *(cittaja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* These consciousness-produced rūpa kalāpas contain fire-element, temperature, which can produce many generations of nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas, not only internally but also externally.

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[3] All conditioned phenomena have three phases: arising, standing, and passing-away.

Depending on whether the power of understanding is great or little, or depending on the power of concentration, these rūpa kalāpas are produced in large or small number spreading out from the body. (See Vsm. sub-com. 2. p. 428, 429, 403).

This process of multiplication and production of rūpa kalāpas occurs only when the fire-element, temperature *(utu),* has reached its standing phase *(ṭhiti-kāla).*

The nutriment-produced rūpa kalāpas *(āhāraja-kalāpa)* that will be mentioned below contain also fire-element that is temperature. When this temperature reaches its standing phase it can produce many generations of temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* In this way, it may produce ten to twelve generations of rūpa kalāpas, and with the assistance of special food, such as the nutritive-essence of devas (divine nutritive-essence), this process can continue for a long period of time. The temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* produced in this way also contain nutritive-essence *(ojā),* and with assistance form nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā),* they can produce many generations of nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* inside the body.

How to See Materiality Produced by Nutriment

Four parts of the body, namely, undigested food, faeces, pus, and urine, consist of nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas that are produced by temperature *(utu)* only. Therefore, newly eaten food inside the stomach consists of only nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas. With the assistance of the fire-element in the life-nonad kalāpas *(jīvita-navaka-kalāpa),* which make up the kammically produced digestive heat, the nutritive-essence *(ojā)* in these nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas produces many generations of nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* These are nutriment-produced kalāpas *(āhāraja-kalāpa),* and spread throughout the six sense-bases. Nutriment taken in one day can produce nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* for up to seven days. Divine nutriment can do this for up to one or two months. The nutriment taken on one day also, with the assistance of kammically produced digestive-heat, gives support for the next seven days to the nutritive-essence in kamma-produced, consciousness-produced, temperature-produced, and succeeding nutriment-produced kalāpas.

In order to see these things you can meditate at the time of eating. The nutriment-produced kalāpas can be seen to spread throughout the body beginning from the mouth, throat, stomach, and intestines. Discern the four elements in the newly eaten food in the mouth, throat, stomach, and intestines, and see the rūpa kalāpas there. Continue to look until you can see that, with the assistance of the kammically produced digestive heat, the nutritive-essence in the rūpa kalāpas in the food produces new rūpa kalāpas which spread throughout the body.

Alternatively, you can see these things if you meditate after having eaten. Having progressively developed concentration stage by stage, discern the four elements in the newly eaten food in the stomach, or in the intestines. Continue to look until you can see that with the assistance of kammically produced digestive heat (the fire-element in the life-nonad kalāpas), the nutritive-essence in the nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* in the food produces the nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* which spread throughout the body. See that these kalāpas are opaque. Then analyse them and discern the eight types of materiality found in each.

Develop concentration and then discern these nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* spreading out through the body and reaching the eye. Discern the eight types of materiality found in those kalāpas in the eye, and note that the nutritive-essence found in those kalāpas is nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā).* When this nutriment-produced nutritive-essence meets with the nutritive-essence contained in the eye-decad kalāpas *(cakkhudasaka-kalāpa),* it assists the kamma-produced nutritive-essence *(kammaja-ojā)* found in the eye-decad kalāpas in producing four or five generations of rūpa kalāpas. The number of generations depends on the strength of assistance of both kamma-produced nutritive-essence *(kammaja-oja)* and nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā).* Again, in those four or five generations of rūpa kalāpas, there is fire-element, which is temperature. This temperature *(utu),* at its standing phase, produces many generations of temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* Try to discern this.

Also try to discern that the nutritive-essence of the body-decad kalāpas, and sex-decad kalāpas, with the assistance of the nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā),* can produce four or five generations of nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* The fire-element, temperature, contained also in these many generations produces many more generations of temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).*

In every consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa *(cittaja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* in the eye there is nutritive-essence. This consciousness-produced nutritive-essence *(cittaja-ojā),* when assisted by the nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā),* produces two or three generations of nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).* The fire-element *(utu)* in these also produces many generations of the temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).*

When a consciousness is a Samatha, Vipassanā, Path, or Fruition Consciousness, it is capable of producing many generations of the consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(cittaja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* within the body. The fire-element in these kalāpas produces the temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* both inside and outside the body. Light is the brilliance of colour of the colour-materiality in these consciousness-produced kalāpas and temperature-produced kalāpas.

As shown above in the eye, in every temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa produced from temperature or fire-element, whether it be kamma-produced fire-element, consciousness-produced fire-element, temperature-produced fire-element, or nutriment-produced fire-element, there is also nutritive-essence. This temperature-produced nutritive-essence *(utuja-ojā)* can, with the assistance of nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā),* produce ten or twelve generations of rūpa kalāpas. (See Vsm. sub-com. p. 403)

Also the fire-element (temperature) contained in the nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* is capable of producing many temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).*

The way in which nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas are produced from food eaten and spread to be present in the eye has already been explained above. The nutritive-essence in these is called nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā).* When the nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā)* of a previous nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa is given assistance by the nutriment-produced nutritive-essence *(āhāraja-ojā)* of a later nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa, it can produce many or a few generations of rūpa kalāpas. This depends on the quality of the food and strength of the digestive fire-element. In these nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* there is also fire-element, temperature, and this can produce many new temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa).*

When temperature and nutritive-essence produce new kalāpas as described above they do it when they reach their standing phase only. In the production of rūpa kalāpas whether it be for two, three, ten, or twelve generations, the last generation contains temperature and nutritive-essence which cannot produce new temperature-produced kalāpas and nutriment-produced kalāpas.

You should read through this description of the production of rūpa kalāpas carefully and look also at the following charts. Then by having a proper teacher and practising systematically, you will become proficient in the discernment of kalāpas produced by the four causes of kamma, consciousness, temperature, and nutriment. In the same way as has been shown in the case of the eye-base, you should discern all the rūpa kalāpas in the other five bases and also the forty-two parts of the body (which will be explained after the following charts).

Eye-Door: Fifty-Four Types of Materiality

	eye-decad kalāpa	body-decad kalāpa	sex-decad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
9	life-faculty	life-faculty	life-faculty
10	eye transparent-element	body transparent-element	sex-materiality
	produced by kamma	produced by kamma	produced by kamma
	transparent	transparent	opaque
	sensitive to the impingement of light	sensitive to the impingement of touch (earth, fire, and air)	quality conveying gender

	consciousness-produced octad kalāpa	temperature-produced octad kalāpa	nutriment-produced octad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
	produced by consciousness	produced by temperature	produced by nutriment
	opaque	opaque	opaque

Out of these fifty-four types of materiality, the eye-transparent-element is called *pasāda cakkhu* or *sasambhāra cakkhu,* the other fifty-three types of materiality are called just *sasambhāra cakkhu.*

Ear-Door: Fifty-Four Types of Materiality

	ear-decad kalāpa	body-decad kalāpa	sex-decad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
9	life-faculty	life-faculty	life-faculty
10	ear transparent-element	body transparent-element	sex-materiality
	produced by kamma	produced by kamma	produced by kamma
	transparent	transparent;	opaque
	sensitive to the impingement of sound	sensitive to the impingement of touch (earth, fire, and air)	quality conveying gender

	consciousness-produced octad kalāpa	temperature-produced octad kalāpa	nutriment-produced octad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
	produced by consciousness	produced by temperature	produced by nutriment
	opaque	opaque	opaque

Out of these fifty-four types of materiality, the ear-transparent-element is called *pasāda sota* or *sasambhāra sota,* the other fifty-three types of materiality are called just *sasambhāra sota.*

Nose-Door: Fifty-Four Types of Materiality

	nose-decad kalāpa	body-decad kalāpa	sex-decad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
9	life-faculty	life-faculty	life-faculty
10	nose transparent-element	body transparent-element	sex-materiality
	produced by kamma	produced by kamma	produced by kamma
	transparent	transparent	opaque
	sensitive to the impingement of odour	sensitive to the impingement of touch (earth, fire, and air)	quality conveying gender

	consciousness-produced octad kalāpa	temperature-produced octad kalāpa	nutriment-produced octad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
	produced by consciousness	produced by temperature	produced by nutriment
	opaque	opaque	opaque

Out of these fifty-four types of materiality, the nose-transparent-element is called *pasāda ghāna* or *sasambhāra ghāna,* the other fifty-three types of materiality are called just *sasambhāra ghāna.*

Tongue-Door: Fifty-Four Types of Materiality

	tongue-decad kalāpa	body-decad kalāpa	sex-decad kalā
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
9	life-faculty	life-faculty	life-faculty
10	tongue transparent-element	body transparent-element	sex-materiality
	produced by kamma	produced by kamma	produced by kamma
	transparent	transparent	opaque
	sensitive to the impingement of taste	sensitive to the impingement of touch (earth, fire, and air)	quality conveying gender

	consciousness-produced octad kalāpa	temperature-produced octad kalāpa	nutriment-produced octad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
	produced by consciousness	produced by temperature	produced by nutriment
	opaque	opaque	opaque

Out of these fifty-four types of materiality, the tongue-transparent element is called *pasāda jivhā* or *sasambhāra jivhā,* the other fifty-three types of materiality are called just *sasambhāra jivhā*.

Body-Door: Forty-Four Types of Materiality

	body-decad kalāpa	sex-decad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour
6	odour	odour
7	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
9	life-faculty	life-faculty
10	body transparent-element	sex-materiality
	produced by kamma	produced by kamma
	transparent	opaque
	sensitive to the impingement of touch (earth, fire, and air)	quality conveying gender

	consciousness-produced octad kalāpa	temperature-produced octad kalāpa	nutriment-produced octad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
	produced by consciousness	produced by temperature	produced by nutriment
	opaque	opaque	opaque

Out of these fifty-four types of materiality, the body-transparent element is called *pasāda kaya* or *sasambhāra ghānā,* the other fifty-three types of materiality are called just *sasambhāra ghānā*.

Mind-Door: Forty-Four Types of Materiality

	heart-decad kalāpa	body-decad kalāpa	sex-decad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
9	life-faculty	life-faculty	life-faculty
10	heart-materiality	body transparent-element	sex-materiality
	produced by kamma	produced by kamma	produced by kamma
	opaque	transparent	opaque
	supporting the mind-element and mind-consciousness element	sensitive to the impingement of touch (earth, fire, and air)	quality conveying gender

	consciousness-produced octad kalāpa	temperature-produced octad kalāpa	nutriment-produced octad kalāpa
1	earth-element	earth-element	earth-element
2	water-element	water-element	water-element
3	fire-element	fire-element	fire-element
4	air-element	air-element	air-element
5	colour	colour	colour
6	odour	odour	odour
7	taste	taste	taste
8	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence	nutritive-essence
	produced by consciousness	produced by temperature	produced by nutriment
	opaque	opaque	opaque

Out of these fifty-four types of materiality, heart-materiality is called heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu)* or *sasambhāra hadaya,* the other fifty-three types of materiality are called just *sasambhāra hadaya.*

Detailed Method for Developing Four-Elements Meditation

(By Way of the Forty-Two Parts of the Body)

There are twenty parts of the body in which earth-element is predominant:

1. Head hair *(kesā)*
2. Body hair *(lomā)*
3. Nails *(nakhā)*
4. Teeth *(dantā)*
5. Skin *(taco)*
6. Flesh *(maṃsaṃ)*
7. Sinews *(nahāru)*
8. Bone *(aṭṭhi)*
9. Bone marrow *(aṭṭhimijaṃ)*
10. Kidneys *(vakkaṃ)*
11. Heart *(hadayaṃ)*
12. Liver *(yakanaṃ)*
13. Membrane *(kilomakaṃ)*
14. Spleen *(pihakaṃ)*
15. Lungs *(papphāsaṃ)*
16. Intestines *(antaṃ)*
17. Mesentery *(antagunaṃ)*
18. Gorge *(udariyaṃ)*
19. Faeces *(karisaṃ)*
20. Brain *(matthaluṅgaṃ)*

Of these twenty parts, all except gorge and faeces (dung) contain forty-four types of materiality, as shown in the charts above for the body-door. Gorge and faeces contain only eight types of materiality, and are made of only temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas.

There are twelve parts in the body in which water-element is predominant:

1. Bile *(pittaṃ)*
2. Phlegm *(semhaṃ)*
3. Pus *(pubbo)* (8)
4. Blood *(lohitaṃ)*
5. Sweat *(sedo)* (16)
6. Fat *(medo)*
7. Tears *(assu)* (16)
8. Grease *(vasā)*
9. Saliva *(kheḷo)* (16)
10. Nasal discharge *(siṅghānika)* (16)
11. Synovial fluid *(lasikā)*
12. Urine *(muttaṃ)* (8)

Of these, all except pus, sweat, tears, saliva, nasal discharge, and urine contain forty-four types of materiality as shown in the charts for the body-door. Pus and urine have eight types of materiality, being only temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas. Sweat, tears, saliva, and nasal discharge have sixteen types of materiality being consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas and temperature-produced kalāpas, and they are produced by consciousness and temperature respectively.

In order to see and discern all these types of materiality in each part of the body, first develop concentration systematically. Then analyse the rūpa kalāpas in the six sense-bases as shown in the charts above. When you are able to do this, discern the part of the body which you wish to examine. When you can discern that part, discern the four elements in it. When you see that part as a transparent form, look for the space in it and you will easily see the kalāpas, which make up that part of the body. If your meditation is strong, then as soon as you look for the four elements in a given part of the body, you will easily see the rūpa kalāpas. When you can see the rūpa kalāpas, analyse them and discern the different kinds of kalāpa present there. With knowledge divide and discern as they really are the kalāpas produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature, and nutriment.

To discern the kalāpas in body hair and head hair, pay attention to the base of the hairs which are inside the skin. Look for the forty-four types of materiality there first because the hair outside the skin has an extremely small amount of body-decad kalāpas, and they are very difficult to discern. In a similar way with the nails of the fingers and toes, you should pay more attention to their parts that are close to the flesh.

There are four parts (here we would rather say components) of the body in which heat is predominant:

1. Heat that warms the body *(santappana tejo),*

2. Heat that causes maturing and aging *(jīrana tejo),*
3. Heat of fever *(daha tejo),*
4. Digestive heat *(pācaka tejo),* a mode of life-nonad kalāpas.

These four components of the body do not possess shape or form like the parts in which earth-element or water-element are predominant. They are made of only not-transparent rūpa kalāpas in which heat is predominant, and so you will have to look for kalāpas in which fire-element is predominant in order to see these components of the body. If they are not clear then examine them at a time when you have had a fever.

There are six components in which air-element is predominant:

1. Air that rises up *(uddhaṅgamā vātā)*
2. Air that goes down *(adhogamā vātā)*
3. Air in the abdomen outside the intestines *(kucchisayā vātā)*
4. Air inside the intestines *(koṭṭhāsayā vātā)*
5. Air that pervades through the limbs *(aṅgamaṅgānusārino vātā)*
6. In-and-out-breath *(assāsa passāsa)*

Of these, all except in-and-out-breath consists of thirty-three types of materiality each. They are made up of four types of kalāpa:

1. Life-faculty-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa or life-nonad kalāpa *(jīvita-navaka-kalāpa)* (nine types of materiality).
2. Consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-as-the-eighth-factor kalāpa or consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa *(cittaja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* (eight types of materiality).

3. Temperature-produced nutritive-essence-as-the-eighth-factor kalāpa or temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa *(utuja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* (eight types of materiality).
4. Nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-as-the-eighth-factor kalāpa or nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpa *(āhāraja-ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa)* (eight types of materiality).

These four types of kalāpa contain a total of thirty-three types of materiality.

The in-and-out-breath contains only nine types of materiality found in what is called a consciousness-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa *(cittaja-sadda-navaka-kalāpa).* This type of kalāpa contains earth-element, water-element, fire-element, air-element, colour, smell, taste, nutriment, and sound.

The in-and-out-breath is produced by consciousness. To see this you have to discern that it is produced by consciousness present in the bhavaṅga mind transparent-element, supported by heart-base materiality. When you see this breath being produced there, discern the four elements in it and you will see the kalāpas which make it up. In each of these kalāpas you will find nine types of materiality including sound. Practise until you can see this.

To analyse the other five types first discern each type of air, and then discern the four elements in each. You will see the rūpa kalāpas which then should be analysed to see all thirty-three types of materiality present in them.

Nine Kinds of Rūpa Kalāpa Produced by Kamma

In examining the rūpa kalāpas in the six sense-bases and forty-two parts of the body, you will find that there are nine kinds of rūpa kalāpa produced by kamma:

1. Eye-decad kalāpa *(cakkhu-dasaka-kalāpa)*
2. Ear-decad kalāpa *(sota-dasaka-kalāpa)*
3. Nose-decad kalāpa *(ghāna-dasaka-kalāpa)*
4. Tongue-decad kalāpa *(jivha-dasaka-kalāpa)*
5. Body-decad kalāpa *(kāya-dasaka-kalāpa)*
6. Female-sex-decad kalāpa *(itthi-bhāva-dasaka-kalāpa)*
7. Male-sex-decad kalāpa *(pumbhāva-dasaka-kalāpa)*
8. Heart-base-decad kalāpa *(hadayavatthu-dasaka-kalāpa)*
9. Life-nonad kalāpa *(jīvita-navaka-kalāpa)*.

These kamma-produced rūpa kalāpas arise in the present because of kamma performed in the past life. Kamma-produced rūpa kalāpas present in the past life were caused by kamma performed in the life previous to that. Kamma-produced rūpa kalāpas that arise in the next life are caused by either kamma done in this present life or that performed in a previous life. To know which kamma they are the result of, whether giving *(dāna),* virtuous conduct *(sīla),* or meditation *(bhāvanā),* you will need to discern materiality and mentality of the past and future. Only then will you understand and experience this for yourself. This will come later in the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition *(paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa).* At the present stage you just have to accept provisionally that these rūpa kalāpas are produced by kamma.

It should also be noted that the above materiality produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature, or nutriment, which is real materiality, will later be comprehended by insight-knowledges as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. There is also not-real materiality[4] mixed together with materiality produced by consciousness, temperature, and nutriment. This is explained below.

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[4] See page 63–66 for the explanation of the ten types of not-real materiality.

Eight Kinds of Rūpa Kalāpa Produced by Consciousness

1. Consciousness-produced pure-octad kalāpa *(cittaja-suddhaṭṭhaka-kalāpa).* It is found in all six sense-bases and most of the forty-two parts of the body. It is real materiality and can be used as the object of Vipassanā practice.
2. Bodily-intimation-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa *(kāya-viññatti-navaka-kalāpa).* Having discerned the mind transparent-element wiggle one of your fingers back and forth. You will see many kalāpas produced by consciousness which when analysed contain only eight types of materiality. When the movement of bodily intimation is added it makes nine.
3. Lightness-as-the-eleventh-factor kalāpa *(lahutā-ekadasaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa with eleven factors; the eight basic factors[5] plus lightness *(lahutā),* softness *(mudutā),* and wieldiness *(kammaññatā).*
4. Bodily-intimation-as-the-twelveth-factor kalāpa *(kāya-viññattti-lahutā-dvadasaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa which has twelve factors, the basic eight plus bodily intimation, lightness, softness, and wieldiness.
5. Verbal-intimation-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpa *(vacīviññatti-dasaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa which contains ten types of materiality; the basic eight plus verbal intimation and sound. Say letters ‘a, b, c’ aloud. Now, discern the mind transparent-element and then say the letters ‘a, b, c’ again and see the kalāpas caused by consciousness spreading to the throat, vocal chords, and other places involved in producing sound.

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[5] The eight basic factors are earth-element, water-element, fire-element, air-element, colour, odour, taste, and nutritive-essence.

Also discern separately the earth-element present in the consciousness-produced kalāpa rubbing against the earth-element in the kamma-produced kalāpas (which produces sound) in the place where sound is produced and the verbal intimation is involved.

6. Verbal-intimation-as-the-thirteenth-factor kalāpa *(vacī-viññatti-sadda-lahutā-terasaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa with thirteen factors; the basic eight plus verbal intimation, sound, lightness, softness, and wieldiness.
7. Consciousness-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa of in-and-out-breath *(assāsa-passāsa-cittaja-sadda-navaka-kalāpa)* is a consciousness-produced kalāpa with nine factors: the basic eight plus sound. This is a real materiality and a suitable object for Vipassanā.
8. Consciousness-produced sound-as-the-twelveth-factor kalāpa of in-and-out-breath *(assāsa-passāsa-cittaja-sadda-lahutādi-dvādasaka-kalāpa)* is a consciousness-produced kalāpa with twelve factors: the basic eight plus sound, lightness, softness, and wieldiness.

Note: In 7. and 8. the sound is the sound of breathing. The kalāpas containing not-real materiality mixed with real materiality should be discerned at the time of discerning mentality and materiality, but later, when meditating on the three characteristics during Vipassanā, they should not be included.

Four Kinds of Rūpa Kalāpa Produced by Temperature

1. Temperature-produced pure-octad kalāpa *(utuja-suddhaṭṭhaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa produced by tem-

perature containing eight factors: the basic eight. It is real materiality.

2. Temperature-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa *(utuja-sadda-navaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa produced by temperature containing nine factors: the basic eight plus sound. It is real materiality.
3. Lightness-as-the-eleventh-factor kalāpa *(lahutādeka-dasaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa with the basic eight factors plus lightness, softness, and wieldiness. It is not-real materiality.
4. Sound-as-the-twelveth-factor kalāpa *(sadda-lahutādi-dvādasaka-kalāpa)* is a kalāpa containing twelve factors: the basic eight plus sound, lightness, softness, and wieldiness. It is not-real materiality.

Of these, the first is found throughout the six sense-bases and in most of the forty-two parts of the body. The second is the kalāpa involved in making sound in the stomach, and similar types of sound. These first two kalāpas can be found internally and externally. The third and fourth have not-real materiality mixed up in them and are not objects for Vipassanā meditation, but should be discerned at the stage in the practice when mentality and materiality are discerned. These last two are not found in inanimate objects, but are found in living beings internally and externally.

Two Kinds of Rūpa Kalāpa Produced by Nutriment

1. Nutriment-produced pure-octad kalāpa *(āhāraja-suddaṭṭhaka-kalāpa)* is a nutriment-produced kalāpa with nutritive-essence as the eighth factor.
2. Lightness-as-the-eleventh-factor kalāpa *(lahutādeka-*

dasaka-kalāpa) is a nutriment-produced kalāpa with lightness as the eleventh factor. It contains the basic eight factors plus lightness, softness, and wieldiness.

Of these two kalāpas, the first consists of real materiality, is found throughout the six sense-bases and in most of the forty-two parts of the body, and is suitable for Vipassanā meditation. The second is found throughout the six sense-bases and in most of the forty-two parts of the body. This kalāpa consists of the eight basic factors which are real materiality and three factors (lightness, softness, and wieldiness) which are not-real materiality. The eight factors which are real materiality are suitable for Vipassanā meditation, but the three factors which are not-real materiality are not suitable for Vipassanā meditation. Both these kalāpas are found internally in oneself, and externally in other living beings.

Three Kinds of Sound

1. The sound of consciousness-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpas of in-and-out-breath *(assāsa-passāsa-cittaja-sadda-navaka-kalāpa)* is the sound of breathing.
2. The sound of verbal-intimation-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpas *(vacīviññatti-dasaka-kalāpa)* is the sound of speech.
3. The sound of temperature-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpas *(utuja-sadda-navaka-kalāpa)* is the sound of the stomach, of the wind, etc.

Of these three types of kalāpa, the first and second are only found in living beings and the third (temperature-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa) is found in both living and inanimate objects. The third includes all sounds except the first two. The verbal intimation materiality in the verbal-intimation-as-the-tenth-factor kalāpa is not-real materiality and is not suitable for Vipassanā meditation, but the other types of materiality present in the kalāpa are real and are suitable for Vipassanā meditation. All types of materiality in the consciousness-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa and the temperature-produced sound-as-the-ninth-factor kalāpa are suitable for Vipassanā meditation.

Discerning the Four Characteristics of Materiality

Only when you are able to discern the materiality present at the time of conception and development of the embryo in the womb, will you be able to discern growth of materiality *(upacaya).* As for continuity *(santati),* aging *(jaratā),* and impermanence *(aniccatā)* of materiality they are just the arising, standing, and passing-away of the real materiality of the six sense-bases or forty-two parts of the body. Firstly discern an individual rūpa kalāpa and analyse it to see if it contains eight, nine, or ten factors. Then try to see all types of real materiality present in a kalāpa arising, standing, and passing-away together. After that discern the arising, standing, and passing-away of all materiality present in the six sense-bases and forty-two parts of the body all at once. The rūpa kalāpas do not all arise, stand, and pass away simultaneously; they are not in phase.

The Time for Discerning as 'Materiality'

Firstly discern separately in each of the six sense-bases the fifty-four or forty-four types of real materiality present. Then try also to discern in each as many types of not-real materiality as you can. Then discern all types of materiality in one base together according to their characteristic of being molested by change. Then, taking all types of materiality in each base together, meditate on them as ‘materiality, materiality’ or ‘These are materiality’ or ‘These are material dhammas’. You must do the same for each of the forty-two parts of the body.

The Characteristic of Being Molested by Change

This means that all types of materiality change in intensity, such as from hot to cold, hard to soft, rough to smooth, but their natural characteristic of hardness, flowing, heat, and supporting does not change. When it is hot the heat of materiality in the body can increase to unbearable levels, and when it is cold the coldness can reach unbearable levels. Thus, there is a constant change in all types of materiality in a kalāpa as they continuously molest each other internally and externally.

To summarise:

1. Before you have seen the rūpa kalāpas, develop concentration up to access concentration by seeing the four elements: earth, water, fire, and air.
2. When you can see the rūpa kalāpas analyse them to see all the materiality in each kalāpa, for example: earth, water, fire, air, colour, odour, taste, nutriment, life-faculty, and eye transparent-element.
3. Then discern: all the materiality in a single sense-base, all the materiality in a single part of the body, all the materiality in all six sense-bases, and all the materiality in all forty-two parts of the body. Having seen that they all have the characteristic of being molested by change, note them as ‘materiality, materiality’, ‘material dhammas, material dhammas’ or ‘This is materiality, this is materiality’.

Part 3

Theory for Discernment of Materiality

The Dhammas That Must Be Comprehended by One Practising Vipassanā Meditation

'Bhikkhus, without fully knowing, without comprehending, without detaching from, without abandoning the All, one is unable to end suffering… Bhikkhus, by fully knowing, by comprehending, by detaching from, by abandoning the All, one is able to end suffering.'

'Sabbaṃ bhikkhave anabhijānaṃ aparijānaṃ avirājayaṃ apajahaṃ abhabbo dukkhakkhayāya… Sabbaṃ ca kho bhikkhave abhijānaṃ parijānaṃ virājayaṃ pajahaṃ bhabbo dukkhakkhayāya.' (Sālayatana Saṃyutta, Sabbavagga, Pathama Aparijānana Sutta)

The commentary to this sutta explains further that this refers to the three types of full understanding *(pariññā).* It says:

'Iti imasmiṃ sutte tissapi pariññā kathita honti. Abhijāna'nti hi vacanena ñātapariññā kathitā parijāna'nti vacanena tīraṇapariññā, virājayaṃ pajaha'nti dvīhi pahānapariññāti.'

This means that fully knowing refers to full understanding as the known *(ñātapariññā),* comprehending refers to full understanding as investigating *(tīraṇapariññā),* and the last two, detaching from and abandoning, refer to full understanding as abandoning *(pahānapariññā).*

Therefore, only by fully understanding all types of materiality and mentality of the five aggregates of clinging with these three types of full understanding, can one do away with desire and craving for materiality and mentality, and make an end to suffering. Furthermore, the sub-commentary to Visuddhimagga says: *'Tañhi anavasesato pariññeyyaṃ, ekaṃsato virajjitabbaṃ.'* (Vsm. sub-com. 2. p. 358)

This means that the five aggregates of clinging which are the objects of Vipassanā understanding must first be completely discerned without exception or remainder. So, in order to remove desire and craving for that mentality-and-materiality, the sub-commentary says one must comprehend the three characteristics of all types of materiality and mentality which are the objects of Vipassanā meditation.

According to the texts a meditator must first be able to discern all types of materiality and mentality which make up the five aggregates of clinging individually. That is: The knowledge that discerns all types of materiality individually is called the Knowledge of Analysing Materiality *(rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa)*. The knowledge that discerns all types of mentality individually is called the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality *(nāma-pariccheda-ñāṇa)*. The knowledge that discerns materiality and mentality as two separate groups is called the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-and-Materiality *(nāmarūpa pariccheda-ñāṇa)*.

These three knowledges are also known as the Knowledge of Discerning Materiality *(rūpa-pariggaha-ñāṇa),* the Knowledge of Discerning Non-Materiality *(arūpa-pariggaha-ñāṇa),* and the Knowledge of Discerning Mentality-and-Materiality *(nāmarūpa-pariggaha-ñāṇa)*. Furthermore, at this stage the knowledge, which clearly sees 'There is no person, being, or soul, but only materiality and mentality exist' is called the Knowledge of Delimiting Mentality-and-Materiality *(nāmarūpa-vavaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa)*.

A person who endeavours to discern all types of materiality and mentality may leave out those connected with jhāna if he has not attained jhāna. If, however, he is able to attain jhāna he should discern and meditate with insight-knowledge on the materiality and mentality associated with whichever jhānas he has attained.

Second, the causes of those materiality and mentality must be known correctly as they really are. This is the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition *(paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa).*

Because by these two knowledges, the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-and-Materiality and Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition, he knows clearly, distinctly, and properly the dhammas that are the objects of insight-knowledge, these two are also called full understanding as the known *(ñātapariññā).*

Third, the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of all materiality, mentality, and their causes must be clearly seen. During the stages of insight from the Knowledge of Comprehension *(sammasana-ñāṇa)* onwards, which constitute Vipassanā, the materiality, mentality, and their causes are comprehended by seeing the three characteristics of each of them.

Of these insight-knowledges, the two of the Knowledge of Comprehension and Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away *(udayabbaya-ñāṇa),* whose functions are to investigate and discern the impermanent, suffering, and non-self characteristics of all materiality, mentality, and their causes, are called full understanding as investigating *(tīraṇapariññā).*

From the Knowledge of Dissolution *(bhaṅga-ñāṇa)* up through the remaining insight-knowledges, only the passing-away of all materiality, mentality, and their causes, is known, and perceived as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. As at that time the defilements that should be abandoned are temporarily absent, these insight-knowledges are called full understanding as abandoning *(pahānapariññā).*

With the Four Path Knowledges *(ariyamagga-ñāṇa),* ignorance *(avijjā),* also known as delusion *(moha),* which clouds the mind and makes it unable to know the Four Noble Truths, is done away with completely. All materiality and mentality which are the Noble Truth of Suffering *(dukkha-sacca),* the causes of these materiality and mentality which are the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering *(samudaya-sacca),* and the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of the Noble Truth of Suffering and the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering are known. Because of the Four Path Knowledges' function and power to complete the function of knowing these dhammas, and to complete the function of investigating these dhammas as impermanent, suffering, and non-self, they are given the name of full understanding as the known and full understanding as investigating. They are also called full understanding as abandoning because they remove defilements without remainder.

A meditator must endeavour to attain complete knowledge of all the materiality and mentality which make up the five aggregates of clinging by developing these three types of full understanding. For this reason the meditator should first know, learn, and memorize all types of materiality and mentality. Below is an explanation of materiality.

Twenty-Eight Types of Materiality

Four Great Elements *(Mahā-Bhūta):*

1. Earth-element *(paṭhavī-dhātu),*

Heavy-earth group	Light-earth group
a. Hardness	b. Softness
c. Roughness	d. Smoothness
e. Heaviness	f. Lightness

2. Water-element *(āpo-dhātu),*
    a. Flowing   b. Cohesion

3. Fire-element *(tejo-dhātu),*
    a. Hot   b. Cold

4. Air-element *(vāyo-dhātu).*
    a. Supporting   b. Pushing

Five Types of Transparent-Element Materiality *(Pasāda-Rūpa)*

This group of materiality is also called sensitivity:

1. Eye transparent-element *(cakkhu-pasāda),*
2. Ear transparent-element *(sota-pasāda),*
3. Nose transparent-element *(ghāna-pasāda),*
4. Tongue transparent-element *(jivhā-pasāda),*
5. Body transparent-element *(kāya-pasāda).* This is dispersed throughout the body.

Seven Types of Field Materiality *(Gocara-Rūpa)*

This group of materiality is also called objective materiality:

1. Colour *(vaṇṇa)* or light,
2. Sound *(sadda),*
3. Smell or odour *(gandha),*
4. Flavour or taste *(rasa),*
5. Touch *(phoṭṭhabba).* = 5. earth-element
    6. fire-element
    7. air-element

The earth-element, fire-element, and air-element taken together constitute the objects of touch. If they are counted separately as three fields or objects, there are seven objects or fields of materiality. When calculating the twenty-eight types of materiality, touch by itself is excluded, because the three types of touch materiality, earth-element, fire-element, and air-element, have already been counted separately within the four great-elements.

Two Types of Sex-Materiality *(Bhāva-Rūpa):*

1. Female-sex-materiality *(itthi-bhāva-rūpa)* which causes one to be female,
2. Male-sex-materiality *(purisa-bhāva-rūpa)* which causes one to be male.

In any individual only one of these two types of materiality is present: in females only the materiality which causes one to be female and in males only the materiality which causes one to be male. Sex-materiality is found throughout the body.

Heart-materiality *(Hadaya-Rūpa)*

1. Heart-base materiality *(hadayavatthu-rūpa)* is the materiality dependent upon which the mind-element, or mind-consciousness-element rests.

The heart-materiality is found in heart-decad kalāpas, which are distributed in the blood in the cavity of the heart. Because it is the place where the mind-element, or mind-consciousness-element resides, it is called the heart-base.

Life-Materiality *(Jīvita Rūpa)*

1. Life-faculty materiality *(jīvitindriya)*

This type of materiality is found throughout the body and it sustains the life of materiality produced by kamma *(kammaja-rūpa).*

Nutriment-Materiality *(Āhāra-Rūpa)*

1. Nutriment *(kabaḷīkāra āhāra)* is the nutritive-essence *(ojā)* found in food.

Nutriment-materiality is present in all kalāpas, even the ones originated by kamma, consciousness, and temperature. In those cases it is called kamma-produced nutritive-essence, consciousness-produced nutritive-essence, and temperature-produced nutritive-essence respectively. In these notes, in order not to create confusion for the meditator, it should be remembered that only the nutritive-essence contained in the nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas, derived from nutritive-essence in the food which has been swallowed, is called nutriment-produced nutritive-essence. Or to be more precise, when one has swallowed fresh food, and it is inside the stomach, and has not yet been absorbed and distributed throughout the body, then the nutritive-essence is still called temperature-produced nutritive-essence.

With the aid of the digestive fire of the life-faculty-nonad kalāpas which is fire-element, the fresh food is digested and this produces a new supply of nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas. These kalāpas are called nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas. The nutritive-essence in these nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas is called nutriment-produced nutritive-essence. The materiality dealt with so far may be given five different names:

1. The above eighteen types of materiality are called natural materiality *(sabhāva-rūpa)* because they each possesses a natural characteristic such as hardness.
2. These eighteen types of materiality are also called general characteristic materiality *(salakkhaṇa-rūpa)* because they possess the general characteristics of all mentality and materiality: they are impermanent because they arise and pass away, they are suffering because they are oppressed by arising and passing-away, and they are non-self because they are not pos-

sessed of any permanent, stable essence, soul, or self.

3. Because these eighteen types of materiality arise with kamma, consciousness, temperature, and nutriment as their causes, they are also called produced materiality *(nipphanna-rūpa).*
4. Because these eighteen types of materiality are constantly unstable and change in intensity from hot to cold, hard to soft, etc., they are called concrete or real materiality *(rūpa-rūpa).*
5. Because these eighteen types of materiality are suitable for perceiving the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, and are therefore suitable objects for Vipassanā meditation, they are also called materiality suitable for meditation *(sammasana-rūpa).*

The remaining ten types of materiality that will be listed later are not like those eighteen above but may be given these five names:

1. Materiality without natural characteristics *(asabhāva-rūpa).*
2. Materiality without the three characteristics *(asalakkhaṇa-rūpa).*
3. Unproduced materiality *(anipphanna-rūpa).*
4. Not-real materiality *(arūpa-rūpa).*
5. Materiality not suitable for Vipassanā meditation (*asammasana-rūpa*).

Delimiting Materiality *(Pariccheda-Rūpa)*

1. Space element *(ākāsa-dhātu)*

The materiality which keeps each rūpa kalāpa from mixing with another, which causes the rūpa kalāpas to be delimited into separate units, and which is the space between rūpa kalāpas, is called delimiting materiality.

Two Types of Materiality of Intimation *(Viññatti):*

2. Bodily intimation *(kāyaviññatti);* actions or movements of the body which cause communication (body language).
3. Verbal intimation *(vacīviññatti);* actions of speech which cause communication.

The actions which cause another person to know one's thoughts or desires are called materiality of intimation. Bodily intimation is the communication of one's thoughts or desires through bodily movements such as beckoning a person with a gesture of the hand.

Verbal intimation is the communication of one's thoughts or desires through the sound of speech such as beckoning a person by saying, 'Please, come here'. It is said that because bodily and verbal intimations are caused or produced by consciousness, these types of materiality cannot be put into non-living things which do not have consciousness (eg. audio tapes). They are found only in the sounds and movements of speech and body of living beings.

Five Types of Materiality as Alteration *(Vīkara-Rūpa):*

4. Lightness *(lahutā)*
    - (a) The lightness of real materiality produced by consciousness.
    - (b) The lightness of real materiality produced by temperature or fire-element.
    - (c) The lightness of real materiality produced by nutriment.
5. Softness *(mudutā)*
    - (a) The softness of real materiality produced by consciousness.

   - (b) The softness of real materiality produced by temperature.
   - (c) The softness of real materiality produced by nutriment.
6. Wieldiness *(kammaññatā)*
   - (a) The wieldiness or pliancy of real materiality produced by consciousness.
   - (b) The wieldiness or pliancy of materiality produced by temperature.
   - (c) The wieldiness or pliancy of real materiality produced by nutriment.

These three types of materiality, softness, lightness, and wieldiness, together with the preceding two types of materiality, bodily intimation and verbal intimation, are called the five kinds of materiality as alteration.

Four Types of Materiality as Characteristic *(Lakkhaṇa-Rūpa):*

7. Growth of materiality *(upacaya)*
   - (a) It has the characteristic of occurring at the beginning of real materiality of one life.
   - (b) It is the cause of growth or completion of the faculties. It causes the appropriate materiality to reach sufficiency and to grow and increase.
8. Continuity of materiality *(santati).* It ensures the continuity of real materiality in a life after the faculties have developed.

The Buddha taught the arising of materiality in the above two ways by dividing it up into two time periods, one from conception till the full development of the faculties of eye, ear, etc., and one after the full development of the faculties. These two types of materiality are just the arising *(upādā)* of real materiality.

9. Aging or maturing of real materiality *(jaratā).* It is the stage of standing *(ṭhiti)* of real materiality.
10. Impermanence of real materiality *(aniccatā).* It is the stage of dissolution, disappearance *(bhaṅga)* of real materiality.

The eighteen types of real materiality and the ten types of not-real materiality give a total of twenty-eight kinds of materiality. Of these twenty-eight types of materiality the earth, water, fire, and air materiality are called elements *(dhātu),* great elements *(mahā-dhātu)* or primary materiality *(bhūta-rūpa).* The other twenty-four kinds of materiality are called derived materiality *(upādā-rūpa)* because they arise depending on the four great elements.

The Nature of Materiality

These twenty-eight types of materiality cannot exist independently or individually but only in a group called a rūpa kalāpa. The smallest combination or agglomeration of materiality is called compactness *(ghana).* All types of materiality in one rūpa kalāpa:

1. Arise at the same time *(ekuppāda),*
2. Cease at the same time *(ekanirodha),*
3. Depend on the same materiality in the same kalāpa *(ekanissaya).*

The derived materiality present in one rūpa kalāpa is derived from or depends on the four elements present in that same kalāpa. Furthermore the four elements in one kalāpa are dependent on each other. But the four elements and the derived materiality in one kalāpa are not dependent on the four elements in another kalāpa.

In order to see with knowledge these types of materiality as they truly are, at the level of ultimate reality, and to see that the derived materiality is dependent on great elements, and great elements are dependent on great elements, it is first necessary to be able to see the rūpa kalāpas. When a meditator is able to see rūpa kalāpas, he will also be able to see the ultimate realities present in each and whether there are eight, nine, ten, or more types of materiality in each. Then he must also endeavour to know the natural characteristics and properties of each of these types of materiality by separating each with knowledge. Only then will he be able to know the ultimate reality of materiality. In these notes this method of seeing rūpa kalāpas is called 'analysis of elements'.

In the Mahāgopālāka Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya, Mūlapaṇṇāsa, Mahāyamaka-vagga, the Buddha says: 'Bhikkhus, in this same way a bhikkhu possessed of eleven qualities is incapable of growth, development, or greatness in this Teaching and Discipline.'

Of these eleven qualities, one enumerated by the Buddha is: 'Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu does not know materiality.'

This is explained further by the Buddha: 'Bhikkhus, here in this Teaching a bhikkhu does not know as it really is, "Whatever materiality there is, all materiality is the four great elements and materiality derived from the four great elements". Bhikkhus, by not knowing thus a bhikkhu does not know materiality.'

The commentary to this says: 'The "not knowing materiality" of the four great elements is the not knowing them in two ways, as to number and as to cause of arising. Not knowing the number means not knowing the twenty-five types of materiality that come in the Pāḷi texts: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body base; sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches; female, and male faculty; life faculty; bodily, and vocal intimation; space-element; water-element; lightness, softness, and wieldiness of materiality; growth, continuity, aging, and impermanence of materiality; nutriment of food.'

Thus, like a cowherd who does not know the number of his cows, a bhikkhu who does not know the number of types of materiality is not capable of discerning materiality; of distinguishing what is not materiality (ie. mentality); of discerning mentality, materiality and their causes; of comprehending the three characteristics and of reaching the goal of meditation.

Just as that cowherd's herd does not increase or grow, so too in this dispensation that bhikkhu does not grow in virtue, concentration, insight, path, fruition, or Nibbāna. Just as that cowherd does not enjoy the five products of cows, so too that bhikkhu does not enjoy the five groups of Dhamma that are the virtue, concentration, understanding, freedom, and the knowing and seeing of freedom of an arahant.

Not knowing the cause of arising of materiality means not knowing, 'These types of materiality have one cause of arising, these have two causes, these have three causes, and these have four causes'. Just like a cowherd who does not know the colours, or appearance of his cows, a bhikkhu who does not know the causes of arising of materiality, is not capable of discerning materiality, of distinguishing what is not materiality,… does not enjoy the five groups of Dhamma… (as above)… freedom of an arahant.

A meditator who really wishes to attain path, fruition, and Nibbāna should pay special attention to these words of the Buddha. To be able to know the number of types of materiality and their causes of arising, it is necessary to be able to discern and analyse rūpa kalāpas individually. The reason is that without being able to analyse rūpa kalāpas, one will not be able to differentiate in any way whatsoever which rūpa kalāpas are caused by kamma, which by consciousness, which by temperature, and which by nutriment. Therefore, without being able to analyse rūpa kalāpas, there is no way whatsoever one can be said to have seen ultimate reality.

Three Kinds of Compactness of Materiality

To be able to see the ultimate reality of materiality, a meditator has to break down the three kinds of compactness of materiality *(rūpa-ghana).* The sub-commentary explains that there are three kinds of compactness related to materiality: *'Ghana-vinibbhogan'ti santati-samūha-kicca-ghañānaṃ vinibbhujānaṃ vivecanaṃ.'* (M. sub-com. 1. p. 365)

Translation: The breaking down of compactness means the breaking down of compactnesses of continuity *(santati),* grouping *(samūha),* and function *(kicca).*

1. Compactness of Continuity *(Santati-ghana)*

In all rūpa kalāpas, whether they are produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature, or nutriment, there is always fire-element *(tejo-dhātu).* This fire-element is also called temperature *(utu).* This fire-element or temperature causes the arising and multiplication of new temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas which are kalāpas produced by temperature with nutritive-essence as the eighth factor. These contain earth-element, water-element, fire-element, air-element, colour, odour, taste, and nutritive-essence.

Let us take the case of an eye-decad kalāpa as an example. If we analyse this kalāpa we will find ten factors: the above eight plus life-faculty and eye transparent-element. Amongst these ten factors there is also fire-element. That fire-element causes the production and multiplication of those kalāpas with nutritive-essence as the eighth factor that are produced by temperature.

In this way, every time materiality reaches its standing phase, the fire-element in eye-decad kalāpas causes temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas to arise four or five times. The last kalāpa of this series contains fire-element which cannot produce further kalāpas produced by temperature. Other rūpa kalāpas should be understood to behave in a similar way.

The fire-element of some rūpa kalāpas causes multiplication of kalāpas four or five times, while some others may be able to cause it to happen many more times. All the temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas produced in these various ways are called rūpa kalāpas produced by temperature.

In a way similar to what has been shown above, nutriment that is consumed is made of temperature-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas, each of which contains nutritive-essence. This nutritive-essence, while not yet absorbed into the body and dispersed, is still temperature-produced materiality. Of the forty-two parts of the body it is known as gorge. This temperature-produced nutritive-essence is digested with the aid of the kammically derived fire of the stomach (the fire contained in a type of life-nonad kalāpa). This nutritive-essence is absorbed and spread throughout the body in the form of nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas. These nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas are called nutriment-produced nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas (kalāpas derived from food).

With the aid of this nutriment-produced nutritive-essence the nutritive-essence of the kamma-produced kalāpas, consciousness-produced kalāpas, and temperature-produced kalāpas is able to multiply and produce a series of nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas from three to twelve times in succession. If the food that is consumed has nutritive-essence which is strong, then according to that strength, many generations of nutritive-essence-octad kalāpas can be produced in succession.

When a meditator can see all these processes distinctly and separately, and can discern each individual rūpa kalāpa in these processes, then he is said to have removed the compactness of continuity.

2. Compactness of Grouping *(Samūha-ghana)*

The breaking down of the compactness of grouping comes with the separation of ultimate materiality, the seeing with knowledge of the individual natural characteristics of each individual ultimate materiality in each rūpa kalāpa, whether there are eight, nine, or ten types of materiality in a kalāpa.

3. Compactness of Function *(Kicca-ghana)*

The breaking down of the compactness of function occurs when one is able to see with wisdom the functions performed by each individual ultimate materiality present in a rūpa kalāpa.

To break down all three forms of compactness, a meditator will need to be able to discern the characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause of each ultimate materiality present in any particular rūpa kalāpa. To see these things a meditator will need to develop one of the two levels of concentration, either access concentration *(upacāra-samādhi)* or absorption concentration *(appanā-samādhi)*.

The Purification of Mind

Do all the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path need to be developed?

A meditator who wishes to attain Nibbāna should recall that in the Dhammacakka Sutta, the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and in other suttas, the path of practice that leads to the cessation of suffering is always taught to consist of eight factors, from right view *(sammā-diṭṭhi)* up to right concentration *(sammā-samādhi).*

Only when all eight factors are present can a meditator reach Nibbāna, which is the cessation of suffering.

Of these eight factors, right concentration is defined as the first, second, third, and fourth jhānas by the Buddha in various suttas. This method of teaching is called either *ukkaṭṭha-niddesa* method or *majjhedīpaka* method. The *ukkaṭṭha-niddesa* method shows the best concentration upon which to base one's Vipassanā practice. The *majjhedīpaka* method points to the middle four of all nine types of concentration. It points to the fine-material-plane concentration *(rūpāvacara-samādhi).* This must be taken together with the highest concentration of the sensual plane *(kāmāvacara),* which is access concentration, and with the immaterial-plane concentration *(arūpāvacara-samādhi)* which occur on either side of the fine-material-plane concentration. Therefore, when the Buddha gives the four jhānas as an example of right concentration it should be understood that all nine types of concentration are meant. Thus, it can be seen that a meditator must possess right concentration to practise Vipassanā and to attain Nibbāna.

To develop the seven stages of purification a meditator must first develop the purification of virtue *(sīla-visuddhi),* followed by the purification of mind *(citta-visuddhi).* Having achieved the purification of mind he can develop the purification of view *(diṭṭhi-visuddhi).*

In the Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha it is stated:

'Lakkhaṇa-rasa-paccupaṭṭhāna-padaṭṭhāna-vasena nāma-rūpa-pariggaho diṭṭhivisuddhi nāma.' (chapter 9, visuddhibhedo)

This can be translated as:

‘The discerning of mentality and materiality according to characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause is called the purification of view.’

A meditator who wishes to complete the development of purification of view must first endeavour to achieve the purification of mind. The Visuddhimagga defines the purification of mind saying: *‘Cittavisuddhi nāma saupacārā aṭṭha samāpattiyo.’* Which means: ‘The purification of mind is the eight attainments together with access concentration.’ (Vsm. XVIII, 1)

So, the four fine-material and four immaterial jhānas plus access concentration constitute the purification of mind. Therefore one must endeavour to achieve either access concentration or one of the jhānas, or all of them together to attain the purification of mind.

The Samādhi Sutta of Saṃyutta Nikāya (Khandavagga Saṃyutta) states:

‘Samādhiṃ bhikkhave bhāvetha, samāhito bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhutaṃ pājānāti, kiñca yathābhutaṃ pājānāti, rūpassa samudayañca atthaṅgamañca, vedanāya samudayañca atthaṅgamañca, saññāya samudayañca atthaṅgamañca, saṅkhārānaṃ samudayañca aṭṭhaṅgamañca, viññāṇassa samudayañca atthaṅgamañca.’

This can be translated as:

‘Bhikkhus, develop concentration. Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is concentrated knows things as they really are. And what does he know as they really are? The arising of materiality and its causes, and its passing-away and its causes. The arising and causes of origination and the passing-away and causes of dissolution of feelings *(vedanā),…* perception *(saññā),…* formations *(saṅkhārā),…* consciousness *(viññāṇa).’*

In this sutta the Buddha has shown that concentration must be developed to be able to know the following as they really are:

1. Materiality, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness, which are ultimate dhammas.
2. The causes of origination of the five aggregates, which are ignorance *(avijjā),* craving *(taṇhā),* clinging *(upādāna),* volitional formations *(saṅkhāra),* kamma, etc.
3. The causes of the dissolution of the five aggregates, which are the cessation of ignorance, craving, clinging, volitional formations, kamma, etc.
4. The arising and passing-away of the five aggregates and their causes.

Any person who wishes to attain Nibbāna should pay attention to this Teaching of the Buddha because it demonstrates the necessity of developing concentration. If, however, meditators were to meditate without developing concentration, then because they did not possess concentration, the following would be beyond their ability:

1. To know correctly how in the past, present, and future, resultant dhammas are produced because of causal dhammas, and how the cessation of these causal dhammas causes the cessation of the resultant dhammas.
2. To see rūpa kalāpas, or if they can see them, to analyse them, remove compactness, and discern ultimate dhammas.
3. To know as they really are the arising and passing-away of the five aggregates, and their causes, internally and externally, as well as in the past, present, and future.

Therefore, for those who as yet do not know these things, it is advisable to respectfully follow the Buddha's advice and develop concentration. In this way one will, with the three understandings *(pariññā),* be able to discern the five aggregates completely, and attain Nibbāna. The Buddha taught this in order that we may be able to reach the end of suffering.

Momentary Concentration of the Purification of Mind

Let us explain a little about the momentary concentration *(khaṇika-samādhi)* of a bare-insight-vehicle individual *(suddha-vipassanā-yānika)* at the time of attaining the purification of mind, and, then the momentary concentration subsequently present at the time of actual Vipassanā practice.

A tranquillity-vehicle individual *(samatha-yānika)* is one who has developed one of the jhānas and, therefore, completed the purification of mind. When he wishes to complete the purification of view, he should enter into one of the jhānas, although not the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Having emerged from that jhāna he should discern the jhāna factors, beginning with applied thought *(vitakka),* etc., and all the mental-concomitants *(cetasika)* associated with that jhāna consciousness. Each should be discerned according to characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause. After that, he should take them all together as mentality because they all have the characteristic of bending towards the object.

Then he should discern the heart-base materiality where those types of mentality reside, the four elements on which that heart-base materiality depends, and the other types of derived materiality present there. They should also be discerned according to characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause (according to Vsm. XVIII, 3).

If, however, that tranquillity-vehicle individual wishes to begin by discerning material dhammas, without having discerned the mental dhammas, he should proceed in the exact same way as a bare-insight-vehicle individual. A bare-insight-vehicle individual develops the purification of view as follows:

'Suddhavipassānāyāniko pana ayameva vā samatha-yāniko catudhātu vavatthāne vuttānaṃ tesaṃ tesaṃ dhātu-pariggaha-mukhānaṃ aññātara mukhavasena saṅkhepato vā vitthārato vā catasso dhātuyo parigganhāti.'

This means: 'A bare-insight-vehicle individual, or a tranquillity-vehicle individual who wishes to begin insight practice by discerning materiality instead of mentality, should discern the four elements in brief, or in detail, in one of the various ways given in chapter XI on the definition of the four elements.' (Vsm. XVIII, 4)

According to these instructions from the Visuddhimagga, a person who wishes to proceed directly to the practice of Vipassanā without any jhānas as a foundation, or a person who has attained one or all of the eight jhānas, but wishes to begin Vipassanā by discerning materiality first, must begin by discerning the four elements in brief, in detail, or both in brief and in detail.

Vipassanā is made up of two sections: contemplation of materiality and contemplation of mentality. These two are also called discernment of materiality *(rūpa-pariggaha)* and discernment of mentality *(arūpa-pariggaha).*

The Majjhima commentary and the Abhidhamma commentary say:

'Tattha bhagavā rūpa-kammaṭṭhānaṃ kathento saṅkhepa-manasikāravasena vā vitthāra-manasikāravasena vā catudhātu-vavatthānaṃ kathesi.' (Abhi. com. 2. p. 252; M. com. 1. p. 280)

This means: 'Of these two, discernment of materiality refers to the defining of the four elements in the brief way or the detailed way.'

These instructions found in the commentaries, on how to discern materiality in Vipassanā, show that the Buddha taught that a bare-insight-vehicle individual, or a tranquillity-vehicle individual who wishes to begin by discerning materiality, must begin by discerning the four elements in brief or in detail. If a meditator practises according to the Teaching of the Buddha, it will produce the most beneficial result.

The Visuddhimagga clearly states that four-elements meditation, which is one of the forty subjects of Samatha meditation, is included in the group of meditation subjects which can lead to access concentration. This means that it is a meditation subject which must be developed up to access concentration.

How to develop the four-elements meditation has been described in detail in Part 2 of this book. The Buddha taught the brief method in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta saying:

'Puna caparaṃ bhikkhave bhikkhu imameva kāyaṃ yathāṭhitaṃ yathā-paṇihitaṃ dhātuso paccavekkhati, "atthi imasmiṃ kāye pathavīdhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātu"ti.' (D. ii, 294; M. 1, 57)

This means: 'Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reflects about this very body, however it be positioned or placed, as consisting of just elements thus: 'There exists in this body just the earth-element, water-element, fire-element, and air-element.'

The Visuddhimagga further says that a meditator should discern the four elements, in the bones, sinews, flesh, and skin, separating each out with the hand of wisdom, and do this again and again one hundred, one thousand, and even one hundred thousand times.

The Visuddhimagga further states:

'Tassevaṃ vāyamamānassa na cireneva dhātuppabhedāvabhāsana paññāpariggahito sabhāvadhammārammaṇattā appanaṃ appatto upacāramatto samādhi uppajjati.'

This means: 'As he makes effort in this way, it is not long before concentration arises in him, which is reinforced by understanding that illuminates the classification of the elements, and which is only access *(upacāra)* and does not reach absorption because it has states with individual essences *(sabhāvadhamma)* as its object.' (Vsm. XI, 42)

Attention should be paid to the fact that the Visudhimagga clearly states that meditation on the four elements can lead to access concentration.

The sub-commentary to Visuddhimagga states:

'Samathayānikassa hi upacārappanā-bhedaṃ samādhiṃ itarassa khaṇikasamādhiṃ ubhayesampi vimokkhamukhattayaṃ vine na kadācipi lokuttarādhigamo saṃbhavati.' (Vsm. subcom. l. p. 15)

This means: 'Without access and absorption concentration in one whose vehicle is tranquillity, or without momentary concentration in one whose vehicle is bare-insight, and without the gateways to liberation (knowledge of impermanence, suffering, and non-self), the supramundane can in either case never be reached.'

Here the sub-commentary uses the term 'momentary concentration' to describe the concentration developed by the bare-insight-vehicle individual, and the Visuddhimagga uses the term 'access concentration'. This distinction in usage should be understood.

Concerning this usage the sub-commentary explains:

'Upacārasamādhīti ca ruḷhī vasena veditabbaṃ. Appanāmhi

upecca cāri samādhi upacārasamādhi appanācettha natthi. Tādisassa pana samādhissa samānalakkhaṇatāya evaṃ vuttaṃ' (Vsm. sub-com. 1. 436)

This means: 'When the commentary uses 'access concentration' to define the highest concentration attainable in four-elements meditation, it must be understood that it is used in the sense of comparison or similarity. Only the concentration close to jhāna can be called 'access' and in this four-elements meditation there is no jhāna to be attained because it has states with individual essences as its object. However, since the level of concentration attained in four-elements meditation is similar to access concentration, the commentators call it 'access concentration'.

Thus it can be seen that the author of the sub-commentary believed that only the highest sensual-plane concentration which has a tranquillity object and is prior to or close to jhāna, can truly be called 'access concentration'. He believed the highest sensual-plane concentration attained by doing four-elements meditation to be called 'access concentration' by the commentators because it is similar. However, he thought it should be called 'momentary concentration' because in this meditation subject there is no jhāna to which one can strictly say there is an 'access'.

Insight and Momentary Concentration

The Visuddhimagga says that a meditator should try to develop the insight-knowledges from the Knowledge of Comprehension *(sammasana-ñāṇa)* upwards only after he has completed five kinds of discernment. They are:

1. Discernment of materiality *(rūpa-pariggaha).*
2. Discernment of mentality *(arūpa-pariggaha).*
3. Discernment of mentality and materiality *(nāmarūpa-pariggaha).*

4. Discernment of dhammas which are causes and dhammas which are results of the present mentality and materiality *(paccaya-pariggaha).*
5. Discernment of dhammas which are causes and dhammas which are results of the past and future mentality and materiality *(addhāna-pariggaha).*

The objects of insight meditation are mentality, materiality, dhammas that are causes, and dhammas that are effects. These are also called formations or conditioned phenomena *(saṅkhāra-dhamma).*

The understanding *(paññā)* that sees all these conditioned phenomena as impermanent, suffering, and non-self is called insight *(vipassanā).* Therefore, a meditator who wishes to develop Vipassanā beginning from the Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is and What Is Not Path *(maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi)* onwards, must first have completed the Purification of View and the Purification by Overcoming Doubt *(kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi).* This is because it is the mentality, materiality, and causes and effects discerned in those purifications *(visuddhi)* where the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self must be perceived and seen with insight.

In the practice of insight the meditator must alternately perceive the three characteristics in the five internal aggregates and in the five external aggregates, and in materiality and mentality (see Vsm. XXI, 86). The Visuddhimagga says one should also perceive the three characteristics in the dhammas in the past and future at the time of practising insight on the factors of dependent-origination during the Knowledge of Comprehension *(sammasana-ñāṇa)* and the Knowledge of Arising and PassingAway *(udayabbaya-ñāṇa)* (see Vsm. XX, 6–9). The concentration that occurs while practising insight is called momentary concentration, because it does not remain on a single object continuously as it does in Samatha.

To be able to practise insight systematically, as described above, the practice must be based upon access or absorption concentration. Here access concentration refers to that produced by four-elements meditation or Samatha meditation. Only the concentration that occurs when doing insight in the above way can be called insight momentary-concentration *(vipassanā-khaṇika-samādhi)*.

Please note that if the meditator is as yet unable to see rūpa kalāpas or individual types of mentality, to analyse them, to discorn the causes and results in the past, present, and future, to perceive the three characteristics of all these dhammas, then his concentration cannot be called insight momentary-concentration.

To summarize: When developing concentration, the bare-insight-vehicle individual's highest concentration reached in four-elements meditation is called access concentration by comparison to the access concentration preceding jhāna. This highest concentration is also called momentary concentration by the sub-commentary. When a bare-insight-vehicle individual is practising Vipassanā, he bases his insight upon access concentration, which for him is the purification of mind *(cittavisuddhi)*. When he proceeds to see with insight conditioned phenomena, he has at that time concentration called insight momentary-concentration. When the tranquillity vehicle individual, who develops access or absorption concentration as his purification of mind, arises from that concentration, and sees with insight conditioned phenomena, he has at that time concentration likewise called insight momentary-concentration.

All Three Characteristics

The Visuddhimagga says: ‘One man comprehends formations as impermanent at the start. But emergence does not come about through merely comprehending them as impermanent, since there must be comprehension of them as suffering and non-self too, so he comprehends them as suffering and non-self.’ (Vsm. XXI, 88)

This shows that by comprehending impermanence only, suffering only, or non-self only one cannot attain the noble paths *(ariyamagga),* but only by comprehending each of the three characteristics alternately, will a meditator be able to reach the noble paths.

Falling into Bhavaṅga

In this book we have written briefly about how to develop absorption jhāna using mindfulness-of-breathing. This meditation subject produces two classes of concentration, access concentration and absorption concentration. The concentration that precedes close to the entering into jhāna concentration is called access concentration and the concentration present when one has entered into jhāna is called absorption concentration.

The Visuddhimagga mentions the potential of the mediator’s mind to fall into a bhavaṅga state during the time of access concontration. It states:

‘Now concentration is of two kinds, that is to say, access concentration and absorption concentration: the mind becomes concentrated in two ways, that is, on the plane of access and on the plane of obtainment. Herein, the mind becomes concentrated on the plane of access by the abandonment of the hindrances, and on the plane of obtainment by the manifestation of the jhāna factors. The difference between the two kinds of concentration is this: the factors are not strong in access. It is because they are not strong that when access has arisen, the mind now makes the sign its object and now re-enters the life-continuum *(bhavaṅga),* just as when a young child is lifted up and stood on its foot, it repeatedly falls down on the ground. But the factors are strong in absorption. It is because they are strong that when absorption concentration has arisen, the mind, having once interrupted the flow of the life-continuum, carries on with a stream of profitable impulsions for a whole night and for a whole day, just as a healthy man, after rising from his seat, could stand for a whole day.' (Vsm. N, 32–33)

Something to Be Careful of

A meditator who develops either access or absorption concentration as a basis for the development of insight will, when a sufficient degree of concentration has been developed, begin to see particles of materiality called rūpa kalāpas when he is discerning the four elements. Then he must continue further to analyse those rūpa kalāpas and to discern in each rūpa kalāpa the four primary-elements, and also the derived types of materiality present, according to their individual characteristics, function, manifestation, and proximate cause. When he is able to discern these things this is called the Knowledge of Analysing Materiality *(rūpa pariccheda-ñāṇa).* At that time he will have realised and penetrated for himself, by right view, the ultimate reality of materiality.

Further, he must continue to discern various types of consciousness *(citta),* and each and every individual mental-concomitant *(cetasika)* that occurs together with the consciousness in every mind-moment *(cittakkhaṇa).* These groups of consciousness and mental-concomitants that occur together in every mind-moment we call nāma kalāpas or mental groups.

When he can discern the consciousness and each individual mental-concomitant present in each mental group *(nāma-kalāpa)* according to characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause, then this is the knowledge that discerns mentality *(nāma-pariccheda-ñāṇa).* At that time he will have realised and penetrated for himself, by right view, the ultimate reality of mentality.

So if a meditator is not able to discern materiality and mentality in this way then he has not yet achieved the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-and-Materiality *(nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa).*

Furthermore, if a meditator has not also discerned by direct knowledge the mentality and materiality in the past and future, then there is no way he can know or see, by direct knowledge, which causes in the past produced the present mentality and materiality, or which causes in the present will produce which mentality and materiality in the future. So without knowing the mentality and materiality of the past and future and their causes, a meditator cannot be said to have achieved the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition *(paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa).*

Thus, if a meditator has not yet really achieved these three knowledges he is as far away as the sky is from the ground from attaining real insight-knowledge, and also in turn from the realisation of the Noble Path, Noble Fruition and Nibbāna.

If a meditator is that far away from attaining Nibbāna, because he has not developed true insight, he should really take heed of the statement in the Visuddhimagga that a person who develops any particular meditation subject and attains access concentration or something equivalent to access concentration, can fall into bhavaṅga.

This is because there are some meditators who fall into bhavaṅga and say 'I knew nothing' or 'Both the objects and the mind noting them ceased'. They believe wrongly that they have realised Nibbāna, but actually all they have done is to fall into bhavaṅga.

It is because they do not have the ability to discern the bhavaṅga mind and its object, they say that 'I knew nothing' or 'Both the objects and the mind noting them ceased.'

However, if they go on to really develop the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition, they will find that at that time there were still bhavaṅga consciousnesses present which have as their objects the object of near-death-impulsion-consciousness *(maraṇāsanna-javana-citta)* in the previous life. In other words, a meditator who has properly completed that insight-knowledge can look back and directly see the bhavaṅga consciousness and its object. It is simply because of the subtlety of that consciousness and their lack of true knowledge of mentality, materiality and causes that some meditators are not able to perceive it.

It must be also pointed out that there is no cessation of consciousness when one realises the unconditioned state of Nibbāna. The Path Consciousness *(magga-citta)* and Fruition Consciousness *(phala-citta)* both have as their object the unconditioned state, which is Nibbāna.

The only time that consciousness can be suspended is during the attainment of cessation *(nirodha-samāpatti)* which is only attainable by arahants and non-returners *(anāgāmi)* who have also attained the eight attainments consisting of the four fine-material jhānas and the four immaterial jhānas. So to say that 'consciousness ceased' or 'the mind ceased', as some meditators report, is not possible or in accordance with the real attainment of Nibbāna.

Glossary of Untranslated Pāḷi Terms

Abhidhamma the third of what are called the Three Baskets *(Tipiṭaka)* of the Theravāda Canon; teachings of the Buddha on a far deeper level than in the suttas; deals only with ultimate reality; seen in Vipassanā meditation. (cf. sutta)

arahant ultimate stage in Theravāda meditation development; an arahant has eradicated all defilements, and at his or her death (Parinibbāna) there is no rebirth. (cf. kamma)

bhavaṅga continuity of identical consciousnesses, broken only when thought-processes occur, the object of which is the same as that which arose at time near death in past-life; the bhavaṅga and its object are visible only in light of concentration. (cf. Abhidhamma)

bhikkhu Buddhist monk with two hundred and twenty-seven precepts to observe; a bhikkhu's major duty is to work at trying to escape from the round of rebirths.

Buddha a person fully enlightened without teacher, who has by himself discovered and teaches the Four Noble Truths.

Dhamma (capitalized) the Teachings of the Buddha; the noble truth.

dhamma (uncapitalized) phenomenon; state; mind-object.

jhāna increasingly advanced and subtle state of concentration on a specific object, with mind aware and increasingly pure. (cf. Samatha)

rūpa kalāpa small particle; the smallest unit of materiality seen in conventional reality; invisible to human-eye, visible to light of concentration.

kamma (Sanskrit: *karma)* action; force from volition which makes good actions produce good results, and bad actions produce bad results.

Nibbāna (Sanskrit: *nirvana)* final enlightenment; the cessation element; an ultimate reality, attained after discerning and surpassing the ultimate realities of mentality-and-materiality; it is seen after the insight knowledges have been matured; it is non-self and uniquely permanent and peaceful; not a place. (Language is at a loss to describe Nibbāna, because Nibbāna is beyond the range of concepts upon which language relies.)

nimitta sign; image upon which meditator concentrates; product of the mind, which depends on perception and level of concentration.

> **parikamma-nimitta** preparatory sign in meditation.
>
> **uggaha-nimitta** taken-up sign, image which is exact mental replica of object of meditation.

paṭibhāga-nimitta purified and clear version of uggaha-nimitta, appears at stable perception and concentration.

Samatha* serenity; practice of concentrating the mind on an object, and developing higher and higher states of concentration, whereby the mind becomes serene. (cf. jhāna, Vipassanā)

sutta single discourse in the second basket of what is called the Three Baskets (Tipiṭaka) of Pāḷi Canon; teachings of the Buddha on a practical level; deals only with conventional truth. (cf. Abhidhamma)

Vipassanā discernment of specific characteristics of materiality and mentality, causes and results, in ultimate reality, and their general characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. (cf. Abhidhamma, arahant, Nibbāna)

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May the merit accrued from this meritorious deed
increase their paramis/perfections and bring them
limitless blessings of good health & happiness
May the dhamma lead all beings to the end of
dukkha and unsatisfactoriness
May all beings quickly attain to the ultimate bliss of Nibbana

"Thich Nhat Hanh writes with the voice of the Buddha." —Sogyal Rinpoche

THICH
NHAT
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The Miracle of Mindfulness

An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation

Translated by Mobi Ho

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⁂

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With Eleven Drawings by Vo-Dinh Mai

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Translator's Preface

The Miracle of Mindfulness was originally written in Vietnamese as a long letter to Brother Quang, a main staff member of the School of Youth for Social Service in South Vietnam in 1974. Its author, the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, had founded the School in the 1960s as an outgrowth of "engaged Buddhism." It drew young people deeply committed to acting in a spirit of compassion. Upon graduation, the students used the training they received to respond to the needs of peasants caught in the turmoil of the war. They helped rebuild bombed villages, teach children, set up medical stations, and organize agricultural cooperatives.

The workers' methods of reconciliation were often misunderstood in the atmosphere of fear and mistrust engendered by the war. They persistently refused to support either armed party and believed that both sides were but the reflection of one reality, and the true enemies were not people, but ideology, hatred, and ignorance. Their stance threatened those engaged in the conflict, and in the first years of the School, a series of attacks were carried out against the students. Several were kidnapped and murdered. As the war dragged on, even after the Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1973, it seemed at times impossible not to succumb to exhaustion and bitterness. Continuing to work in a spirit of love and understanding required great courage.

From exile in France, Thich Nhat Hanh wrote to Brother Quang to encourage the workers during this dark time. Thay Nhat Hanh ("Thay," the form of address for Vietnamese monks, means "teacher") wished to remind them of the essential discipline of following one's breath to nourish and maintain calm mindfulness, even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. Because Brother Quang and the students were his colleagues and friends, the spirit of this long letter that became *The Miracle of Mindfulness* is personal and direct. When Thay speaks here of village paths, he speaks of paths he had actually walked with Brother Quang. When he mentions the bright eyes of a young child, he mentions the name of Brother Quang's own son.

I was living as an American volunteer with the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation in Paris when Thay was writing the letter. Thay headed the delegation, which served as an overseas liaison office for the peace and reconstruction efforts of the Vietnamese Buddhists, including the School of Youth for Social Service. I remember late evenings over tea, when Thay explained sections of the letter to delegation members and a few close friends. Quite naturally, we began to think of other people in other countries who might also benefit from the practices described in the book.

Thay had recently become acquainted with young Buddhists in Thailand who had been inspired by the witness of engaged Buddhism in Vietnam. They too wished to act in a spirit of awareness and reconciliation to help avert the armed conflict erupting in Thailand, and they wanted to know how to work without being overcome by anger and discouragement. Several of them spoke English, and we discussed translating Brother Quang's letter. The idea of a translation took on a special poignancy when the confiscation of Buddhist publishing houses in Vietnam made the project of printing the letter as a small book in Vietnam impossible.

I happily accepted the task of translating the book into English. For nearly three years, I had been living with the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation, where day and night I was immersed in the lyrical sound of the Vietnamese language. Thay had been my "formal" Vietnamese teacher; we had slowly read through some of his earlier books, sentence by sentence. I had thus acquired a rather unusual vocabulary of Vietnamese Buddhist terms. Thay, of course, had been teaching me far more than language during those three years. His presence was a constant gentle reminder to return to one's true self, to be awake by being mindful.

As I sat down to translate *The Miracle of Mindfulness,* I remembered the episodes during the past years that had nurtured my own practice of mindfulness. There was the time I was cooking furiously and could not find a spoon I'd set down amid a scattered pile of pans and ingredients. As I searched here and there, Thay entered the kitchen and smiled. He asked, "What is Mobi looking for?" Of course, I answered, "The spoon! I'm looking for a spoon!" Thay answered, again with a smile, "No, Mobi is looking for Mobi."

Thay suggested I do the translation slowly and steadily, in order to maintain mindfulness. I translated only two pages a day. In the evenings, Thay and I went over those pages, changing and correcting words and sentences. Other friends provided editorial assistance. It is difficult to describe the actual experience of translating his words, but my awareness of the feel of pen and paper, awareness of the position of my body and of my breath enabled me to see most clearly the mindfulness with which Thay had written each word. As I watched my breath, I could see Brother Quang and the workers of the School of Youth for Social Service. More than that, I began to see that the words held the same personal and lively directness for any reader because they had been written in mindfulness and lovingly directed to real people. As I continued to translate, I could see an expanding community—the School's workers, the young Thai Buddhists, and many other friends throughout the world.

When the translation was completed we typed it, and Thay printed a hundred copies on the tiny offset machine squeezed into the delegation's bathroom. Mindfully addressing each copy to friends in many countries was a happy task for delegation members.

Since then, like ripples in a pond, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* has traveled far. It has been translated into several other languages and has been printed or distributed on every continent in the world. One of the joys of being the translator has been to hear from many people who have discovered the book. I once met someone in a bookstore who knew a student who had taken a copy to friends in the Soviet Union. And recently, I met a young Iraqi student in danger of being deported to his homeland, where he faces death for his refusal to fight in a war he believes cruel and senseless; he and his mother have both read *The Miracle of Mindfulness* and are practicing awareness of the breath. I have learned, too, that proceeds from the Portuguese edition are being used to assist poor children in Brazil. Prisoners, refugees, health-care workers, educators, and artists are among those whose lives have been touched by this little book. I often think of *The Miracle of Mind-*

fulness as something of a miracle itself, a vehicle that continues to connect lives throughout the world.

American Buddhists have been impressed by the natural and unique blending of Theravada and Mahayana traditions, characteristic of Vietnamese Buddhism, which the book expresses. As a book on the Buddhist path, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* is special because its clear and simple emphasis on basic practice enables any reader to begin a practice of his or her own immediately. Interest in the book, however, is not limited to Buddhists. It has found a home with people of many different religious traditions. One's breath, after all, is hardly attached to any particular creed.

Those who enjoy this book will likely be interested in other books by Thich Nhat Hanh which have been translated into English. His books in Vietnamese, including short stories, novels, essays, historical treatises on Buddhism and poetry, number in the dozens. While several of his earlier books in English are no longer in print, more recent works available in translation include *A Guide to Walking Meditation, Being Peace,* and *The Sun My Heart.*

Denied permission to return to Vietnam, Thich Nhat Hanh spends most of the year living in Plum Village, a community he helped found in France. There, under the guidance of the same Brother Quang to whom *The Miracle of Mindfulness* was originally addressed years ago, community members tend hundreds of plum trees. Profits from the sales of their fruit are used to assist hungry children in Vietnam. In addition, Plum Village is open every summer to visitors from around the world who wish to spend a month of mindfulness and meditation. In recent years, Thich Nhat Hanh has also made annual visits to the United States and Canada to conduct week-long retreats organized by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

I would like to express special gratitude to Beacon Press for having the vision to print this new edition of *The Miracle of Mindfulness*. I hope that each new person whom it reaches will sense that the book is addressed as personally to him or her as it was to Brother Quang and the workers of the School of Youth for Social Service.

Mobi Ho
August 1987

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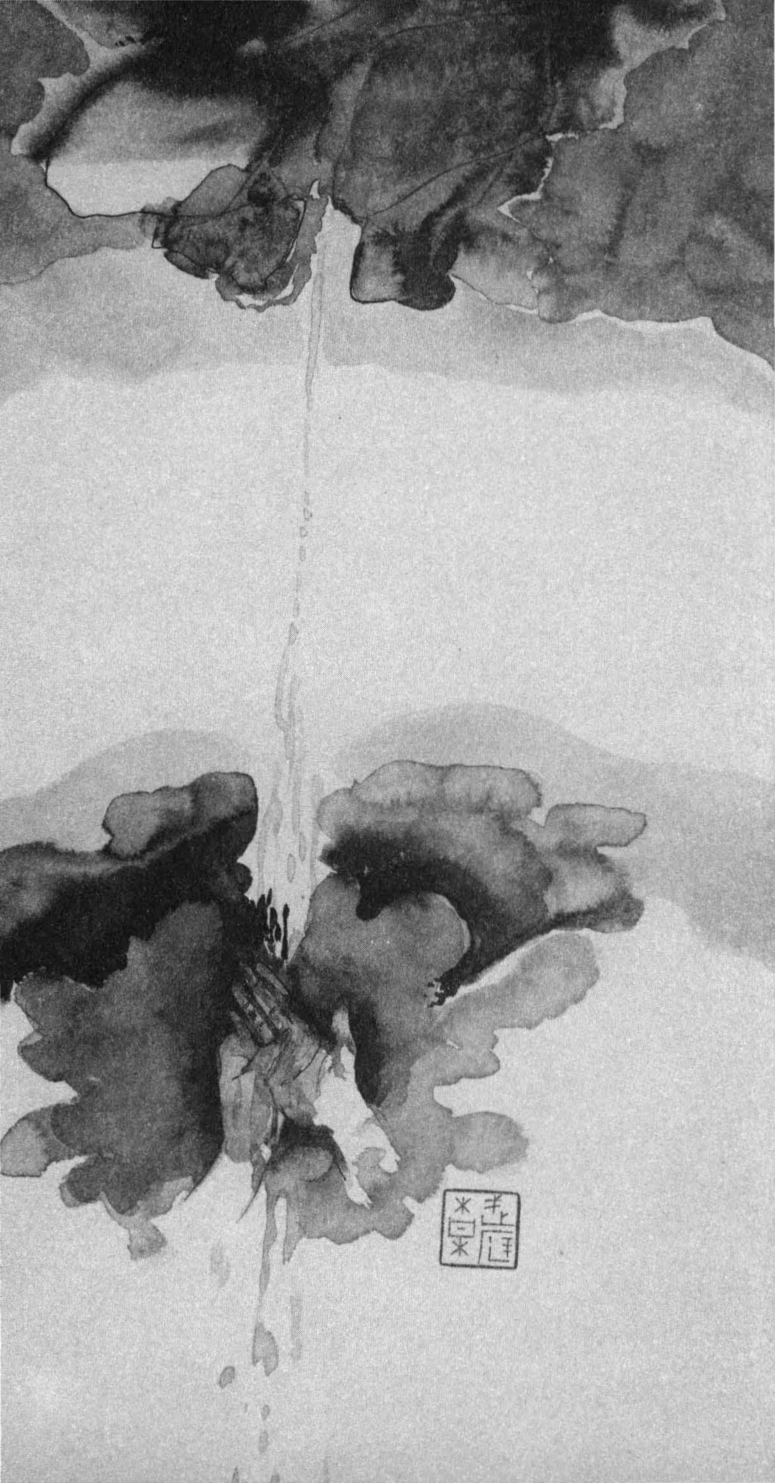
The Miracle of Mindfulness



One

The Essential Discipline

Yesterday Allen came over to visit with his son Joey. Joey has grown so quickly! He's already seven years old and is fluent in French and English. He even uses a bit of slang he's picked up on the street. Raising children here is very different from the way we raise children at home. Here parents believe that "freedom is necessary for a child's development." During the two hours that Allen and I were talking, Allen had to keep a constant eye on Joey. Joey played, chattered away, and interrupted us, making it impossible to carry on a real conversation. I gave him several picture books for children but he barely glanced at them before tossing them aside and interrupting our conversation again. He demands the constant attention of grown-ups.

Later, Joey put on his jacket and went outside to play with a neighbor's child. I asked Allen, "Do you find family life easy?" Allen didn't answer directly. He said that during the past few weeks, since the birth of Ana, he had been unable to sleep any length of time. During the night, Sue wakes him up and—because she is too tired herself—asks him to check to make sure Ana is still breathing. "I get up and look at the baby and then come back and fall asleep again. Sometimes the ritual happens two or three times a night."

"Is family life easier than being a bachelor?" I asked. Allen didn't answer directly. But I understood. I asked another question: "A lot of people say that if you have a family you're less lonely and have more security. Is that true?" Allen nodded his head and mumbled something softly. But I understood.

Then Allen said, "I've discovered a way to have a lot more time. In the past, I used to look at my time as if it were divided into several parts. One part I reserved for Joey, another part was for Sue, another part to help with Ana, another part for household work. The time left over I considered my own. I could read, write, do research, go for walks.

"But now I try not to divide time into parts anymore. I consider my time with Joey and Sue as my own time. When I help Joey with his homework, I try to find ways of seeing his time as my own time. I go through his lesson with him, sharing his presence and finding ways to be interested in what we do during that time. The time for him becomes my own time. The same with Sue. The remarkable thing is that now I have unlimited time for myself!"

Allen smiled as he spoke. I was surprised. I knew that Allen hadn't learned this from reading any books. This was something he had discovered for himself in his own daily life.

Washing the dishes to wash the dishes

Thirty years ago, when I was still a novice at Tu Hieu Pagoda, washing the dishes was hardly a pleasant task. During the Season of Retreat when all the monks returned to the monastery, two novices had to do all the cooking and wash the dishes for sometimes well over one hundred monks. There was no soap. We had only ashes, rice husks, and coconut husks, and that was all. Cleaning such a high stack of bowls was a chore, especially during the winter when the water was freezing cold. Then you had to heat up a big pot of water before you could do any scrubbing. Nowadays one stands in a kitchen equipped with liquid soap, special scrubpads, and even running hot water which makes it all the more agreeable. It is easier to enjoy washing the dishes now. Anyone can wash them in a hurry, then sit down and enjoy a cup of tea afterwards. I can see a machine for washing clothes, although I wash my own things out by hand, but a dishwashing machine is going just a little too far!

While washing the dishes one should only be washing the dishes, which means that while washing the dishes one should be completely aware of the fact that one is washing the dishes. At first glance, that might seem a little silly:

why put so much stress on a simple thing? But that's precisely the point. The fact that I am standing there and washing these bowls is a wondrous reality. I'm being completely myself, following my breath, conscious of my presence, and conscious of my thoughts and actions. There's no way I can be tossed around mindlessly like a bottle slapped here and there on the waves.

The cup in your hands

In the United States, I have a close friend named Jim Forest. When I first met him eight years ago, he was working with the Catholic Peace Fellowship. Last winter, Jim came to visit. I usually wash the dishes after we've finished the evening meal, before sitting down and drinking tea with everyone else. One night, Jim asked if he might do the dishes. I said, "Go ahead, but if you wash the dishes you must know the way to wash them." Jim replied, "Come on, you think I don't know how to wash the dishes?" I answered, "There are two ways to wash the dishes. The first is to wash the dishes in order to have clean dishes and the second is to wash the dishes in order to wash the dishes." Jim was delighted and said, "I choose the second way—to wash the dishes to wash the dishes." From then on, Jim knew how to wash the dishes. I transferred the "responsibility" to him for an entire week.

If while washing dishes, we think only of the cup of tea that awaits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as if they were a nuisance, then we are not "washing the dishes to wash the dishes." What's more, we are not alive during the time we are washing the dishes. In fact we are completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink. If we can't wash the dishes, the chances are we won't be able to drink our tea either. While drinking the cup of tea, we will only be thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands. Thus we are sucked away into the future —and we are incapable of actually living one minute of life.

Eating a tangerine

I remember a number of years ago, when Jim and I were first traveling together in the United States, we sat under a tree and shared a tangerine. He began to talk about what we would be doing in the future. Whenever we thought about a project that seemed attractive or inspiring, Jim became so immersed in it that he literally forgot about what he was doing in the present. He popped a section of tangerine in his mouth and, before he had begun chewing it, had another slice ready to pop into his mouth again. He was hardly aware he was eating a tangerine. All I had to say was, "You ought to eat the tangerine section you've already taken." Jim was startled into realizing what he was doing.

It was as if he hadn't been eating the tangerine at all. If he had been eating anything, he was "eating" his future plans.

A tangerine has sections. If you can eat just one section, you can probably eat the entire tangerine. But if you can't eat a single section, you cannot eat the tangerine. Jim understood. He slowly put his hand down and focused on the presence of the slice already in his mouth. He chewed it thoughtfully before reaching down and taking another section.

Later, when Jim went to prison for activities against the war, I was worried about whether he could endure the four walls of prison and sent him a very short letter: "Do you remember the tangerine we shared when we were together? Your being there is like the tangerine. Eat it and be one with it. Tomorrow it will be no more."

The Essential Discipline

More than thirty years ago, when I first entered the monastery, the monks gave me a small book called "The Essential Discipline for Daily Use," written by the Buddhist monk Doc The from Bao Son pagoda, and they told me to memorize it. It was a thin book. It couldn't have been more than 40 pages, but it contained all the thoughts Doc The used to awaken his mind while doing any task. When he woke up in the morning, his first thought was, "Just awakened, I hope that every person will attain great awareness and see in complete clarity." When he washed his hands, he used this thought to place himself in mindfulness: "Washing my hands, I hope that every person will have pure hands to receive reality." The book is comprised entirely of such sentences. Their goal was to help the beginning practitioner take hold of his own consciousness. The Zen Master Doc The helped all of us young novices to practice, in a relatively easy way, those things which are taught in the Sutra of Mindfulness. Each time you put on your robe, washed the dishes, went to the bathroom, folded your mat, carried buckets of water, or brushed your teeth, you could use one of the thoughts from the book in order to take hold of your own consciousness.

The Sutra of Mindfulness* says, "When walking, the practitioner must be conscious that he is walking. When sitting, the practitioner must be conscious that he is sitting. When lying down, the practitioner must be conscious that he is lying down. . . . No matter what position one's body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position. Practicing thus, the practitioner lives in direct and constant mindfulness of the body . . ." The mindfulness of

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**In the Sutras, Buddha usually teaches that one should use one's breath in order to achieve Concentration. The Sutra which speaks about the use of your breath to maintain mindfulness is the Anapanasati Sutra. This Sutra was translated and commentated on by a Vietnamese Zen Master of Central Asian origin named Khuong Tang Hoi, around the beginning of the Third Century A.D.* Anapana *means breath and* sati *means mindfulness. Tang Hoi translated it as "Guarding the Mind." The Anapanasati Sutra, that is, is the sutra on using one's breath to maintain mindfulness. The Sutra on Breath to Maintain Mindfulness is the 118th Sutra in the Majhima Nikaya collection of sutras and it teaches 16 methods of using one's breath.*

the positions of one's body is not enough, however. We must be conscious of each breath, each movement, every thought and feeling, everything which has any relation to ourselves.

But what is the purpose of the Sutra's instruction? Where are we to find the time to practice such mindfulness? If you spend all day practicing mindfulness, how will there ever be enough time to do all the work that needs to be done to change and to build an alternative society? How does Allen manage to work, study Joey's lesson, take Ana's diapers to the laundromat, and practice mindfulness at the same time?

Two

The Miracle Is to Walk on Earth

Allen said that since he's begun to consider Joey's and Sue's time as his own, he has "unlimited time." But perhaps he has it only in principle. Because there are doubtless times when Allen forgets to consider Joey's time as his own time while going over Joey's homework with him, and thus Allen may lose that time. Allen might hope for the time to pass quickly, or he may grow impatient because that time seems wasted to him, because it isn't his own time. And so, if he really wants "unlimited time," he will have to keep alive the realization that "this is my time" throughout the time he's studying with Joey. But during such times, one's mind is inevitably distracted by other thoughts, and so if one really wants to keep one's consciousness alive (from now on I'll use the term "mindfulness" to refer to keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality), then one must practice right now in one's daily life, not only during meditation sessions.

When you are walking along a path leading into a village, you can practice mindfulness. Walking along a dirt path, surrounded by patches of green grass, if you practice mindfulness you will experience that path, the path leading into the village. You practice by keeping this one thought alive: "I'm walking along the path leading into the village." Whether it's sunny or rainy, whether the path is dry or wet, you keep that one thought, but not just repeating it like a machine, over and over again. Machine thinking is the opposite of mindfulness. If we're really engaged in mindfulness while walking along the path to the village, then we will consider the act of each step we take as an infinite wonder, and a joy will open our hearts like a flower, enabling us to enter the world of reality.

I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments, existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality. People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child—our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

Sitting

Zen Master Doc The says that when sitting in meditation, one should sit upright, giving birth to this thought, "Sitting here is like sitting on the Bodhi spot." The Bodhi spot is where Lord Buddha sat when he obtained Enlightenment. If any person can become a Buddha, and the Buddhas are all those countless persons who have obtained enlightenment, then many have sat on the very spot I sit on now. Sitting on the same spot as a Buddha gives rise to happiness and sitting in mindfulness means itself to have become a Buddha. The poet Nguyen Cong Tru experienced the same thing when he sat down on a certain spot, and suddenly saw how others had sat on the same spot countless ages ago, and how in ages to come others would also come to sit there:

On the same spot I sit today
Others came, in ages past, to sit.
One thousand years, still others will come.
Who is the singer, and who the listener?

That spot and the minutes he spent there became a link in eternal reality.

But active, concerned people don't have time to spend leisurely, walking along paths of green grass and sitting beneath trees. One must prepare projects, consult with the neighbors, try to resolve a million difficulties; there is hard work to do. One must deal with every kind of hardship, every moment keeping one's attention focused on the work, alert, ready to handle the situation ably and intelligently.

You might well ask: Then how are we to practice mindfulness?

My answer is: keep your attention focused on the work, be alert and ready to handle ably and intelligently any situation which may arise —this is mindfulness. There is no reason why mindfulness should be different from focusing all one's attention on one's work, to be alert and to be using one's best judgment. During the moment one is consulting, resolving, and dealing with whatever arises, a calm heart and self-control are necessary if one is to obtain good results. Anyone can see that. If we are not in control of ourselves but instead let our impatience or anger interfere, then our work is no longer of any value.

Mindfulness is the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves. Consider, for example: a magician who cuts his body into many parts and places each part in a different region—hands in the south, arms in the east, legs in the north, and then by some miraculous power lets forth a cry which reassembles whole every part of his body. Mindfulness is like that —it is the miracle which can call back in a flash our dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each minute of life.

Taking hold of one's breath

Thus mindfulness is at the same time a means and an end, the seed and the fruit. When we practice mindfulness in order to build up concentration, mindfulness is a seed. But mindfulness itself is the life of awareness: the presence of mindfulness means the presence of life, and therefore mindfulness is also the fruit. Mindfulness frees us of forgetfulness and dispersion and makes it possible to live fully each minute of life. Mindfulness enables us to live.

You should know how to breathe to maintain mindfulness, as breathing is a natural and extremely effective tool which can prevent dispersion. Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again.

Breathe in lightly a fairly long breath, conscious of the fact that you are inhaling a deep breath. Now breathe out all the breath in your lungs, remaining conscious the whole time of the exhalation. The Sutra of Mindfulness teaches the method to take hold of one's breath in the following manner: "Be ever mindful you breathe in and mindful you breathe out. Breathing in a long breath, you know, 'I am breathing in a long breath.' Breathing out a long breath, you know, 'I am breathing out a long breath.' Breathing in a short breath, you know, 'I am breathing in a short breath.' Breathing out a short breath, you know, 'I am breathing out a short breath.'"

"Experiencing a whole breath-body, I shall breathe in," thus you train yourself. "Experiencing the whole breath-body, I shall breathe out," thus you train yourself. "Calming the activity of the breath-body, I shall breathe in," thus you train yourself. "Calming the activity of the breath-body, I shall breathe out," thus you train yourself.

In a Buddhist monastery, everyone learns to use breath as a tool to stop mental dispersion and to build up concentration power. Concentration power is the strength which comes from practicing mindfulness. It is the concentration which can help one obtain the Great Awakening. When a worker takes hold of his own breath, he has already become awakened. In order to maintain mindfulness throughout a long period, we must continue to watch our breath.

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It is autumn here and the golden leaves falling one by one are truly beautiful. Taking a 10-minute walk in the woods, watching my breath and maintaining mindfulness, I feel refreshed and restored. Like that, I can really enter into a communion with each leaf.

Of course, walking alone on a country path, it is easier to maintain mindfulness. If there's a friend by your side, not talking but also watching his breath, then you can continue to maintain mindfulness without difficulty. But if the friend at your side begins to talk, it becomes a little more difficult.

If, in your mind, you think, "I wish this fellow would quit talking, so I could concentrate," you have already lost your mindfulness. But if you think, instead, "If he wishes to talk, I will answer, but I will continue in mindfulness, aware of the fact that we are walking along this path together, aware of what we say, I can continue to watch my breath as well."

If you can give rise to that thought, you will be continuing in mindfulness. It is harder to practice in such situations than when you are alone, but if you continue to practice nonetheless, you will develop the ability to maintain much greater concentration. There is a line from a Vietnamese folk song that says: "Hardest of all is to practice the Way at home, second in the crowd, and third in the pagoda." It is only in an active and demanding situation that mindfulness really becomes a challenge!

Counting one's breath and following one's breath

In the meditation sessions I recently began for non-Vietnamese, I usually suggest various methods that I myself have tried, methods that are quite simple. I suggest to beginners the method of "Following the length of the breath." The student lies, back down, on the floor. Then I invite all of the participants to gather around so I can show them a few simple points:

1) Although inhaling and exhaling are the work of the lungs, and take place in the chest area, the stomach area also plays a role. The stomach rises with the filling of the lungs. At the beginning of the breath the stomach begins to push out. But after inhaling about two-thirds of the breath, it starts to lower again.

2) Why? Between your chest and stomach there is a muscular membrane, the diaphragm. When you breathe in correctly the air fills the lower part of the lungs first, before the upper lungs fill with air, the diaphragm pushes down on the stomach, causing the stomach to rise. When you have filled your upper lungs with air, the chest pushes out and causes the stomach to lower again.

3) That is why, in former times, people spoke of the breath as originating at the navel and terminating at the nostrils.

For beginners, lying down to practice breathing is very helpful. The important thing is to guard against making too much of an effort: too great an effort can be dangerous for the lungs, especially when the lungs are weak from many years of incorrect breathing. In the beginning, the practitioner should lie on his or her back on a thin mat or blanket, the two arms loosely at the sides. Don't prop your head on a pillow. Focus your attention on your exhalation and watch how long it is. Measure it slowly by counting in your mind: 1, 2, 3. . . After several times, you will know the "length" of your breath: Perhaps it is 5. Now try to extend the exhalation for one more count (or 2) so that the exhalation's length becomes 6 or 7. Begin to exhale counting from 1 to 5. When you reach 5, rather than immediately inhaling as before, try to extend the exhalation to 6 or 7. This way you will empty your lungs of more air. When you have finished exhaling, pause for an instant to let your lungs take in fresh air on their own. Let them take in just as much air as they want without making any effort. The inhalation will normally be "shorter" than the exhalation. Keep a steady count in your mind to measure the length of both. Practice several weeks like this, remaining mindful of all your exhalations and inhalations while lying down. (If you have a clock with a loud tick you can use it to help you keep track of the length of your inhalation and exhalation.)

Continue to measure your breath while walking, sitting, standing, and especially whenever you are outdoors. While walking, you might use your steps to measure your breath. After a month or so, the difference between the length of your exhalation and inhalation will lessen, gradually evening out until they are of equal measure. If the length of your exhalation is 6, the inhalation will also be 6.

If you feel at all tired while practicing, stop at once. But even if you do not feel tired, don't prolong the practice of long, equal breaths beyond short periods of time—10 to 20 breaths are enough. The moment you feel the least fatigue, return your breathing to normal. Fatigue is an excellent mechanism of our bodies and the best advisor as to whether one should rest or continue. In order to measure your breath you can count—or use a rhythmic phrase that you like. (If the length of your breath is

6, you might use instead of numbers, the six words, "My heart is now at peace." If the length is 7 you might use, "I walk on the new green earth." A Buddhist might say, "I take refuge in the Buddha." For a Christian it could be "Our Father who art in heaven." When you are walking, each step should correspond to one word.

Quiet breathing

Your breath should be light, even, and flowing, like a thin stream of water running through the sand. Your breath should be very quiet, so quiet that a person sitting next to you cannot hear it. Your breathing should flow gracefully, like a river, like a watersnake crossing the water, and not like a chain of rugged mountains or the gallop of a horse. To master our breath is to be in control of our bodies and minds. Each time we find ourselves dispersed and find it difficult to gain control of ourselves by different means, the method of watching the breath should always be used.

The instant you sit down to meditate, begin watching your breath. At first breathe normally, gradually letting your breathing slow down until it is quiet, even, and the lengths of the breaths are fairly long. From the moment you sit down to the moment your breathing has become deep and silent, be conscious of everything that is happening in yourself.

As the Buddhist Sutra of Mindfulness says: "Breathing in a long breath, you know, 'I am breathing in a long breath.' Breathing out a long breath, the practitioner knows, 'I am breathing out a long breath.' Breathing in a short breath, you know, 'I am breathing in a short breath.' Breathing out a short breath, you know, 'I am breathing out a short breath.' Experiencing the whole breath-body, I shall breathe in." Thus you train yourself. "Experiencing the whole breath-body, I shall breathe out." Thus you train yourself. "Calming the activity of the breath-body, I shall breathe in." Thus you train yourself. "Calming the activity of the breath-body, I shall breathe out." Thus you train yourself.

After about 10 to 20 minutes, your thoughts will have quieted down like a pond on which not even a ripple stirs.

Counting your breath

Making your breath calm and even is called the method of following one's breath. If it seems hard at first, you can substitute the method of counting your breath. As you breathe in, count 1 in your mind, and as you breathe out, count 1. Breathe in, count 2. Breathe out, count 2. Continue through 10, then return to 1 again. This counting is like a string which attaches your mindfulness to your breath. This exercise is the beginning point in the process of becoming continuously conscious of your breath. Without mindfulness, however, you will quickly lose count. When the count is lost, simply return to 1 and keep trying until you can keep the count correctly. Once you can truly focus your attention on the counts, you have reached the point at which you can begin to abandon the counting method and begin to concentrate solely on the breath itself.

In those moments when you are upset or dispersed and find it difficult to practice mindfulness, return to your breath: Taking hold of your breath is itself mindfulness. Your breath is the wondrous method of taking hold of your consciousness. As one religious community says in its rule, "One should not lose oneself in mind-dispersion or in one's surroundings. Learn to practice breathing in order to regain control of body and mind, to practice mindfulness, and to develop concentration and wisdom."

Every act is a rite

Suppose there is a towering wall from the top of which one can see vast distances—but there is no apparent means to climb it, only a thin piece of thread hanging over the top and coming down both sides. A clever person will tie a thicker string onto one end of the thread, walk over to the other side of the wall, then pull on the thread bringing the string to the other side. Then he will tie the end of the string to a strong rope and pull the rope over. When the rope has reached the bottom of one side and is secured on the other side, the wall can be easily scaled.

Our breath is such a fragile piece of thread. But once we know how to use it, it can become a wondrous tool to help us surmount situations which would otherwise seem hopeless. Our breath is the bridge from our body to our mind, the element which reconciles our body and mind and which makes possible one-ness of body and mind. Breath is aligned to both body and mind and it alone is the tool which can bring them both together, illuminating both and bringing both peace and calm.

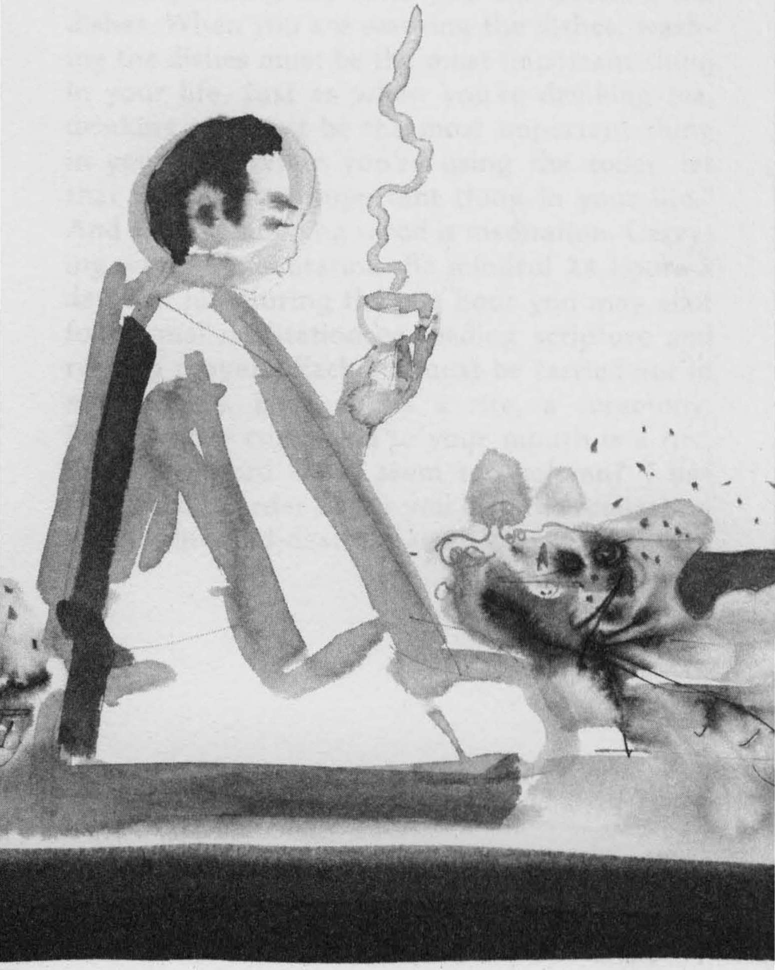
Many persons and books discuss the immense benefits that result from correct breathing. They report that a person who knows how to breathe is a person who knows how to build up endless vitality: breath builds up the lungs, strengthens the blood, and revitalizes every organ in the body. They say that proper breathing is more important than food. And all of these statements are correct.

Years ago, I was extremely ill. After several years of taking medicine and undergoing medical treatment, my condition was unimproved. So I turned to the method of breathing and, thanks to that, was able to heal myself.

Breath is a tool. Breath itself is mindfulness. The use of breath as a tool may help one obtain immense benefits, but these cannot be considered as ends in themselves. These benefits are only the by-products of the realization of mindfulness.

In my small class in meditation for non-Vietnamese, there are many young people. I've told them that if each one can meditate an hour each day that's good, but it's nowhere near enough. You've got to practice meditation when you walk, stand, lie down, sit, and work, while washing your hands, washing the dishes, sweeping the floor, drinking tea, talking to friends, or whatever you are doing: "While washing the dishes, you might be thinking about the tea afterwards, and so try to get them out of the way as quickly as possible in order to sit and drink tea. But that means that you are incapable of living during the time you are washing the dishes. When you are washing the dishes, washing the dishes must be the most important thing in your life. Just as when you're drinking tea, drinking tea must be the most important thing in your life. When you're using the toilet, let that be the most important thing in your life." And so on. Chopping wood is meditation. Carrying water is meditation. Be mindful 24 hours a day, not just during the one hour you may allot for formal meditation or reading scripture and reciting prayers. Each act must be carried out in mindfulness. Each act is a rite, a ceremony. Raising your cup of tea to your mouth is a rite. Does the word "rite" seem too solemn? I use that word in order to jolt you into the realization of the life-and-death matter of awareness.

washing your hands, washing the dishes, sweeping the floor, drinking tea, talking to friends, or whatever you are doing. "While washing the dishes, you might be thinking about the tea afterwards, and so try to get them out of the way as quickly as possible in order to sit and drink the tea. But that means that you are incapable of living during the time you are washing the dishes. When you are washing the dishes, washing the dishes must be the most important thing in your life. Just as when you're drinking tea, drinking [illegible] be the most important thing in your [illegible] you're using the toilet, let that [illegible] important thing in your life." And [illegible] is meditation. Carrying [illegible] Be mindful 24 hours a day [illegible] during the one hour you may allot for [illegible] meditation or reading scripture and re[illegible] Each act must be carried out in [illegible] is a rite, a ceremony. [illegible]



Three

A Day of Mindfulness

Every day and every hour, one should practice mindfulness. That's easy to say, but to carry it out in practice is not. That's why I suggest to those who come to the meditation sessions that each person should try hard to reserve one day out of the week to devote entirely to their practice of mindfulness. In principle, of course every day should be your day, and every hour your hour. But the fact is that very few of us have reached such a point. We have the impression that our family, place of work, and society rob us of all our time. So I urge that everyone set aside one day each week. Saturday, perhaps.

If it is Saturday, then Saturday must be entirely your day, a day during which you are completely the master. Then Saturday will be the lever that will lift you to the habit of practicing mindfulness. Every worker in a peace or service community, no matter how urgent its work, has the right to such a day, for without it we will lose ourselves quickly in a life full of worry and action, and our responses will become increasingly useless. Whatever the day chosen, it can be considered as the day of mindfulness.

To set up a day of mindfulness, figure out a way to remind yourself at the moment of waking that this day is your day of mindfulness. You might hang something on the ceiling or on the wall, a paper with the word "mindfulness" or a pinebranch—anything that will suggest to you as you open your eyes and see it that today is your day of mindfulness. Today is your day. Remembering that, perhaps you can feel a smile which affirms that you are in complete mindfulness, a smile that nourishes that perfect mindfulness.

While still lying in bed, begin slowly to follow your breath—slow, long, and conscious breaths. Then slowly rise from bed (instead of turning out all at once as usual), nourishing mindfulness by every motion. Once up, brush your teeth, wash your face, and do all your morning activities in a calm and relaxing way, each movement done in mindfulness. Follow your breath, take hold of it, and don't let your thoughts scatter. Each movement should be done calmly. Measure your steps with quiet, long breaths. Maintain a half smile.

Spend at least a half hour taking a bath. Bathe slowly and mindfully, so that by the time you have finished, you feel light and refreshed. Afterwards, you might do household work such as washing dishes, dusting and wiping off the tables, scrubbing the kitchen floor, arranging books on their shelves. Whatever the tasks, do them slowly and with ease, in mindfulness. Don't do any task in order to get it over with. Resolve to do each job in a relaxed way, with all your attention. Enjoy and be one with your work. Without this, the day of mindfulness will be of no value at all. The feeling that any task is a nuisance will soon disappear if it is done in mindfulness. Take the example of the Zen Masters. No matter what task or motion they undertake, they do it slowly and evenly, without reluctance.

For those who are just beginning to practice, it is best to maintain a spirit of silence throughout the day. That doesn't mean that on the day of mindfulness, you shouldn't speak at all. You can talk, you can even go ahead and sing, but if you talk or sing, do it in complete mindfulness of what you are saying or singing, and keep talking and singing to a minimum. Naturally, it is possible to sing and practice mindfulness at the same time, just as long as one is conscious of the fact that one is singing and aware of what one is singing. But be warned that it is much easier, when singing or talking, to stray from mindfulness if your meditation strength is still weak.

At lunchtime, prepare a meal for yourself. Cook the meal and wash the dishes in mindfulness. In the morning, after you have cleaned and straightened up your house, and in the afternoon, after you have worked in the garden or watched clouds or gathered flowers, prepare a pot of tea to sit and drink in mindfulness. Allow yourself a good length of time to do this. Don't drink your tea like someone who gulps down a cup of coffee during a workbreak. Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the whole earth revolves—slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future. Live the actual moment. Only this actual moment is life. Don't be attached to the future. Don't worry about things you have to do. Don't think about getting up or taking off to do anything. Don't think about "departing."

Be a bud sitting quietly in the hedge
Be a smile, one part of wondrous existence
Stand here. There is no need to depart.
This homeland is as beautiful as the homeland of
our childhood
Do not harm it, please, and continue to sing . . .
("Butterfly Over the Field of Golden Mustard Flowers")

In the evening, you might read scripture and copy passages, write letters to friends, or do anything else you enjoy outside of your normal duties during the week. But whatever you do, do it in mindfulness. Eat only a little for the evening meal. Later, around 10 or 11 o'clock, as you sit in meditation, you will be able to sit more easily on an empty stomach. Afterwards you might take a slow walk in the fresh night air, following your breath in mindfulness and measuring the length of your breaths by your steps. Finally, return to your room and sleep in mindfulness.

Somehow we must find a way to allow each worker a day of mindfulness. Such a day is crucial. Its effect on the other days of the week is immeasurable. Ten years ago, thanks to such a day of mindfulness, Chu Van and our other sisters and brothers in the Tiep Hien Order were able to guide themselves through many difficult times. After only three months of observing such a day of mindfulness once a week, I know that you will see a significant change in your life. The day of mindfulness will begin to penetrate the other days of the week, enabling you to eventually live seven days a week in mindfulness. I'm sure you agree with me on the day of mindfulness's importance!

Four

The Pebble

Why should you meditate? First of all, because each of us needs to realize total rest. Even a night of sleep doesn't provide total rest. Twisting and turning, the facial muscles tense, all the while dreaming—hardly rest! Nor is lying down rest when you still feel restless and twist and turn. Lying on your back, with your arms and legs straight but not stiff, your head unsupported by a pillow—this is a good position to practice breathing and to relax all the muscles; but this way it is also easier to fall asleep. You cannot go as far in meditation lying down as by sitting. It is possible to find total rest in a sitting position, and in turn to advance deeper in meditation in order to resolve the worries and troubles that upset and block your consciousness.

Among our workers in Vietnam there are many who can sit in the lotus position, the left foot placed on the right thigh and the right foot placed on the left thigh. Others can sit in the half lotus, the left foot placed on the right thigh, or the right foot placed on the left thigh. In our meditation class in Paris, there are people who do not feel comfortable in either of the above two positions and so I have shown them how to sit in the Japanese manner, the knees bent, resting on their two legs. By placing a pillow beneath one's feet, it is possible to sit that way for more than an hour and a half. Even so, anyone can learn to sit in the half lotus, though at the beginning it may be somewhat painful. But after a few weeks of practice, the position gradually becomes quite comfortable. During the initial period, when the pain can be bothersome, alternate the position of the legs or change to another sitting position. If one sits in the lotus or half-lotus position, it is necessary to use a cushion to sit on so that both knees touch the floor. The three points of bodily contact with the floor created by this position provide an extremely stable position.

Keep your back straight. This is very important. The neck and head should be aligned with the spinal column; they should be straight but not stiff or wood-like. Keep your eyes focused a yard or two in front of you. If you can, maintain a half smile.

Now begin to follow your breath and to relax all of your muscles. Concentrate on keeping your spinal column straight and on following your breath. As for everything else, let it go. Let go of everything. If you want to relax the worry-tightened muscles in your face, let the half smile come to your face. As the half smile appears, all the facial muscles begin to relax. The longer the half smile is maintained, the better. It is the same smile you see on the face of the Buddha.

Place your left hand, palm side up, in your right palm. Let all the muscles in your hands, fingers, arms, and legs relax. Let go of everything. Be like the waterplants which flow with the current, while beneath the surface of the water the riverbed remains motionless. Hold on to nothing but your breath and the half smile.

For beginners, it is better to sit no longer than 20 or 30 minutes. During that time, you can readily obtain total rest. The technique for obtaining this rest lies in two things—watching and letting go: watching your breath, and letting go of everything else. Release every muscle in your body. After about 15 minutes or so, it is possible to reach a deep quiet filled with inner peace and joy. Maintain this quiet and peace.

Some people look on meditation as a toil and want the time to pass quickly in order to rest afterwards. Such persons do not know how to sit yet. If you sit correctly, it is possible to find total relaxation and peace right in the position of sitting. Often it helps to meditate on the image of a pebble thrown into a river.

How is one helped by the image of the pebble? Sit down in whatever position suits you best, the half lotus or lotus, back straight, the half smile on your face. Breathe slowly and deeply, following each breath, becoming one with the breath. Then let go of everything. Imagine yourself as a pebble which has been thrown into a river. The pebble sinks through the water effortlessly. Detached from everything, it falls by the shortest distance possible, finally reaching the bottom, the point of perfect rest. You are like a pebble which has let itself fall into the river, letting go of everything. At the center of your being is your breath. You don't need to know the length of time it takes before reaching the point of complete rest on the bed of fine sand beneath the water. When you feel yourself resting like a pebble which has reached the riverbed, that is the point when you begin to find your own rest. You are no longer pushed or pulled by anything.

If you cannot find joy in peace in these very moments of sitting, then the future itself will only flow by as a river flows by, you will not be able to hold it back, you will be incapable of living the future when it has become the present. Joy and peace are the joy and peace possible in this very hour of sitting. If you cannot find it here, you won't find it anywhere. Don't chase after your thoughts as a shadow follows its object. Don't run after your thoughts. Find joy and peace in this very moment.

⁂

This is your own time. This spot where you sit is your own spot. It is on this very spot and in this very moment that you can become enlightened. You don't have to sit beneath a special tree in a distant land. Practice like this for a few months, and you will begin to know a profound and renewing delight.

The ease of sitting depends on whether you practice mindfulness a little or a lot each day. And it depends on whether or not you sit regularly. Whenever possible, join with friends or relatives and organize an hour of sitting each night, say from 10 to 11. Whoever wishes could come to sit for a half hour, or even an entire hour.

Mindfulness of the mind

Someone might well ask: is relaxation then the only goal of meditation? In fact the goal of meditation goes much deeper than that. While relaxation is the necessary point of departure, once one has realized relaxation, it is possible to realize a tranquil heart and clear mind. To realize a tranquil heart and clear mind is to have gone far along the path of meditation.

Of course, to take hold of our minds and calm our thoughts, we must also practice mindfulness of our feelings and perceptions. To take hold of your mind, you must practice mindfulness of the mind. You must know how to observe and recognize the presence of every feeling and thought which arises in you. The Zen Master Thuong Chieu wrote, "If the practitioner knowns his own mind clearly he will obtain results with little effort. But if he does not know anything about his own mind, all of his effort will be wasted." If you want to know your own mind, there is only one way: to observe and recognize everything about it. This must be done at all times, during your day-to-day life no less than during the hour of meditation.

During meditation, various feelings and thoughts may arise. If you don't practice mindfulness of the breath, these thoughts will soon lure you away from mindfulness. But the breath isn't simply a means by which to chase away such thoughts and feelings. Breath remains the vehicle to unite body and mind and to open the gate to wisdom. When a feeling or thought arises, your intention should not be to chase it away, even if by continuing to concentrate on the breath the feeling or thought passes naturally from the mind. The intention isn't to chase it away, hate it, worry about it, or be frightened by it. So what exactly should you be doing concerning such thoughts and feelings? Simply acknowledge their presence. For example, when a feeling of sadness arises, immediately recognize it: "A feeling of sadness has just arisen in me." If the feeling of sadness continues, continue to recognize "A feeling of sadness is still in me." If there is a thought like, "It's late but the neighbors are surely making a lot of noise," recognize that the thought has arisen. If the thought continues to exist, continue to recognize it. If a different feeling or thought arises, recognize it in the same manner. The essential thing is not to let any feeling or thought arise without recognizing it in mindfulness, like a palace guard who is aware of every face that passes through the front corridor.

If there are no feelings or thoughts present, then recognize that there are no feelings or thoughts present. Practicing like this is to become mindful of your feelings and thoughts. You will soon arrive at taking hold of your mind. One can join the method of mindfulness of the breath with the mindfulness of feelings and thoughts.

The guard—or the monkey's shadow?

While practicing mindfulness, don't be dominated by the distinction between good and evil, thus creating a battle within oneself.

Whenever a wholesome thought arises, acknowledge it: "A wholesome thought has just arisen." And if an unwholesome thought arises, acknowledge it as well: "An unwholesome thought has just arisen." Don't dwell on it or try to get rid of it, however much you don't like it. To acknowledge it is enough. If you have departed, then you must know that you have departed, and if you are still there, know that you are still there. Once you have reached such an awareness, there will be nothing you need fear anymore.

When I mentioned the guard at the emperor's gate, perhaps you imagined a front corridor with two doors, one entrance and one exit, with your mind as the guard. Whatever feeling or thought enters, you are aware of its entrance, and when it leaves, you are aware of its exit. But the image has a shortcoming: it suggests that those who enter and exit the corridor are different from the guard. In fact our thoughts and feelings are us. They are a part of ourselves. There is a temptation to look upon them, or at least some of them, as an enemy force which is trying to disturb the concentration and understanding of your mind. But, in fact, when we are angry, *we ourselves* are anger. When we are happy, *we ourselves* are happiness. When we have certain thoughts, *we are those thoughts*. We are both the guard and the visitor at the same time. We are both the mind and the observer of the mind. Therefore, chasing away or dwelling on any thought isn't the important thing. The important thing is to be aware of the thought. This observation is not an objectification of the mind: it does not establish distinction between subject and object. Mind does not grab on to mind; mind does not push mind away. Mind can only observe itself. This observation isn't an observation of some object outside and independent of the observer.

Remember the Koan of the Zen Master Bach An who asked, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" Or take the example of the taste the tongue experiences: what separates taste and tastebud? The mind experiences itself directly within itself. This is of special importance, and so in the Sutra of Mindfulness, Buddha always uses the phrasing "mindfulness of feeling in feeling, mindfulness of mind in mind." Some have said that the Buddha used this phrasing in order to put emphasis on such words as feeling and mind, but I don't think they have fully grasped the Buddha's intention. Mindfulness of feeling in feeling is mindfulness of feeling directly while experiencing feeling, and certainly not contemplation of some *image* of feeling which one creates to give feeling some objective, separate existence of its own outside of oneself. Descriptive words make it sound like a riddle or paradox or tongue twister: mindfulness of feeling in feeling is the mind experiencing mindfulness of the mind in the mind. The objectivity of an outside observer to examine something is the method of science, but it is not the method of meditation. Thus the image of the guard and the visitor fails to illustrate adequately the mindful observation of mind.

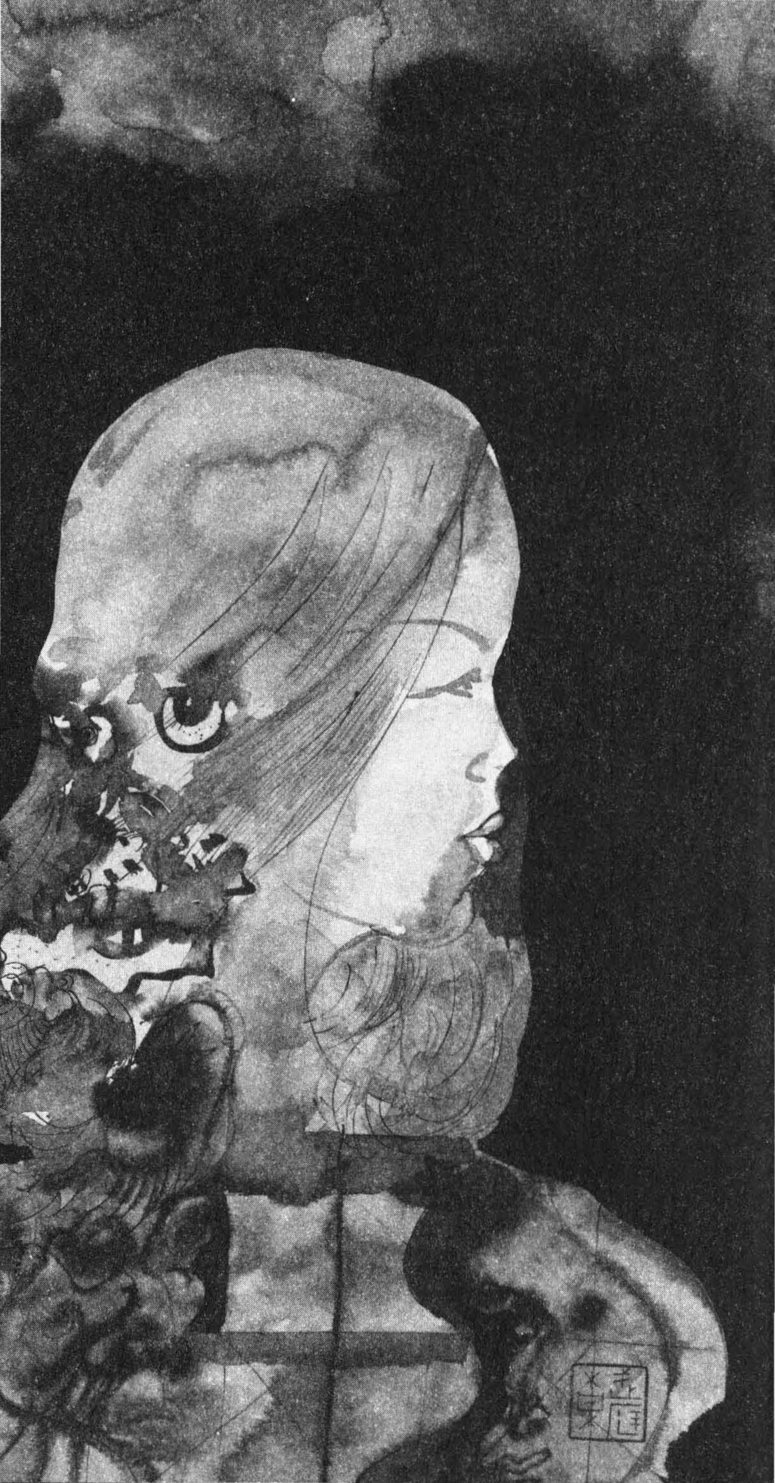
The mind is like a monkey swinging from branch to branch through a forest, says the Sutra. In order not to lose sight of the monkey by some sudden movement, we must watch the monkey constantly and even to be one with it. Mind contemplating mind is like an object and its shadow—the object cannot shake the shadow off. The two are one. Wherever the mind goes, it still lies in the harness of the mind. The Sutra sometimes uses the experession "Bind the monkey" to refer to taking hold of the mind. But the monkey image is only a means of expression. Once the mind is directly and continually aware of itself, it is no longer like a monkey. There are not two minds, one which swings from branch to branch and another which follows after to bind it with a piece of rope.

The person who practices meditation usually hopes to see into his or her own nature in order to obtain awakening. But if you are just beginning, don't wait to "see into your own nature." Better yet, don't wait for anything. Especially don't wait to see the Buddha or any version of "ultimate reality" while you're sitting.

In the first six months, try only to build up your power of concentration, to create an inner calmness and serene joy. You will shake off anxiety, enjoy total rest, and quiet your mind. You will be refreshed and gain a broader, clearer view of things, and deepen and strengthen the love in yourself. And you will be able to respond more helpfully to all around you.

Sitting in meditation is nourishment for your spirit and nourishment for your body, as well. Through sitting, our bodies obtain harmony, feel lighter, and are more at peace. The path from the observation of your mind to seeing into your own nature won't be too rough. Once you are able to quiet your mind, once your feelings and thoughts no longer disturb you, at that point your mind will begin to dwell in mind. Your mind will take hold of mind in a direct and wondrous way which no longer differentiates between subject and object. Drinking a cup of tea, the seeming distinction between the one who drinks and the tea being drunk evaporates. Drinking a cup of tea becomes a direct and wondrous experience in which the distinction between subject and object no longer exists.

Dispersed mind is also mind, just as waves rippling in water are also water. When mind has taken hold of mind, deluded mind becomes true mind. True mind is our real self, is the Buddha: the pure one-ness which cannot be cut up by the illusory divisions of separate selves, created by concepts and language. But I don't want to say a lot about this.



Five

One Is All, All Is One: The Five Aggregates

Let me devote a few lines here to talk about the methods you might use in order to arrive at liberation from narrow views, and to obtain fearlessness and great compassion. These are the contemplations on interdependence, impermanency, and compassion.

While you sit in meditation, after having taken hold of your mind, you can direct your concentration to contemplate on the interdependent nature of certain objects. This meditation is *not* a discursive reflection on a philosophy of interdependence. It is a penetration of mind into mind itself, using one's concentrative power to reveal the real nature of the object being contemplated.

Recall a simple and ancient truth: the subject of knowledge cannot exist independently from the object of knowledge. To see is to see something. To hear is to hear something. To be angry is to be angry over something. Hope is hope for something. Thinking is thinking about something. When the object of knowledge (the something) is not present, there can be no subject of knowledge. The practitioner meditates on mind and, by so doing, is able to see the interdependence of the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge. When we practice mindfulness of breath, then the knowledge of breath is mind. When we practice mindfulness of the body, then the knowledge of body is mind. When we practice mindfulness of objects outside ourselves, then the knowledge of these objects is also mind. Therefore the contemplation of the nature of interdependence of all objects is also the contemplation of the mind.

Every object of the mind is itself mind. In Buddhism, we call the objects of mind the dharmas. Dharmas are usually grouped into five categories:

1. bodily and physical forms
2. feelings
3. perceptions
4. mental functionings
5. consciousness

These five categories are called *the five aggregates*. The fifth category, consciousness, however, contains all the other categories and is the basis of their existence.

Contemplation on interdependence is a deep looking into all dharmas in order to pierce through to their real nature, in order to see them as part of the great body of reality and in order to see that the great body of reality is indivisible. It cannot be cut into pieces with separate existences of their own.

The first object of contemplation is our own person, the assembly of the five aggregates in ourselves. You contemplate right here and now on the five aggregates which make up yourself.

You are conscious of the presence of bodily form, feeling, perception, mental functionings, and consciousness. You observe these "objects" until you see that each of them has intimate connection with the world outside yourself: if the world did not exist then the assembly of the five aggregates could not exist either.

Consider the example of a table. The table's existence is possible due to the existence of things which we might call "the non-table world": the forest where the wood grew and was cut, the carpenter, the iron ore which became the nails and screws, and countless other things which have relation to the table, the parents and ancestors of the carpenter, the sun and rain which made it possible for the trees to grow.

If you grasp the table's reality then you see that in the table itself are present all those things whch we normally think of as the non-table world. If you took away any of those non-table elements and returned them to their sources—the nails back to the iron ore, the wood to the forest, the carpenter to his parents—the table would no longer exist.

A person who looks at the table and can see the universe is a person who can see the way. You meditate on the assembly of the five aggregates in yourself in the same manner. You meditate on them until you are able to see the presence of the reality of one-ness in your own self, and can see that your own life and the life of the universe are one. If the five aggregates return to their sources, the self no longer exists. Each second, the world nourishes the five aggregates. The self is no different from the assembly of the five aggregates themselves. The assembly of the five aggregates plays, as well, a crucial role in the formation, creation, and destruction of all things in the universe.

Liberation from suffering

People normally cut reality into compartments, and so are unable to see the interdependence of all phenomena. To see one in all and all in one is to break through the great barrier which narrows one's perception of reality, a barrier which Buddhism calls the attachment to the false view of self.

Attachment to the false view of self means belief in the presence of unchanging entities which exist on their own. To break through this false view is to be liberated from every sort of fear, pain, and anxiety. When the Bodhisattva Quan the Am, who has been such a source of inspiration of peace workers in Vietnam, saw into the reality of the five aggregates giving rise to emptiness of Self, she was liberated from every suffering, pain, doubt, and anger. The same would apply to everyone. If we contemplate the five aggregates in a stubborn and diligent way, we, too, will be liberated from suffering, fear, and dread.

We have to strip away all the barriers in order to live as part of the universal life. A person isn't some private entity traveling unaffected through time and space as if sealed off from the rest of the world by a thick shell. Living for 100 or for 100,000 lives sealed off like that not only isn't living, but it isn't possible. In our lives are present a multitude of phenomena, just as we ourselves are present in many different phenomena. We are life, and life is limitless. Perhaps one can say that we are only alive when we live the life of the world, and so live the sufferings and joys of others. The suffering of others is our own suffering, and the happiness of others is our own happiness. If our lives have no limits, the assembly of the five aggregates which makes up our self also has no limits. The impermanent character of the universe, the successes and failures of life can no longer manipulate us. Having seen the reality of interdependence and entered deeply into its reality, nothing can oppress you any longer. You are liberated. Sit in the lotus position, observe your breath, and ask one who has died for others.

Meditation on interdependence is to be practiced constantly, not only while sitting, but as an integral part of our involvement in all ordinary tasks. We must learn to see that the person in front of us is ourself and that we are that person. We must be able to see the process of inter-origination and interdependence of all events, both those which are happening and those which will happen.

A ride on the waves of birth and death

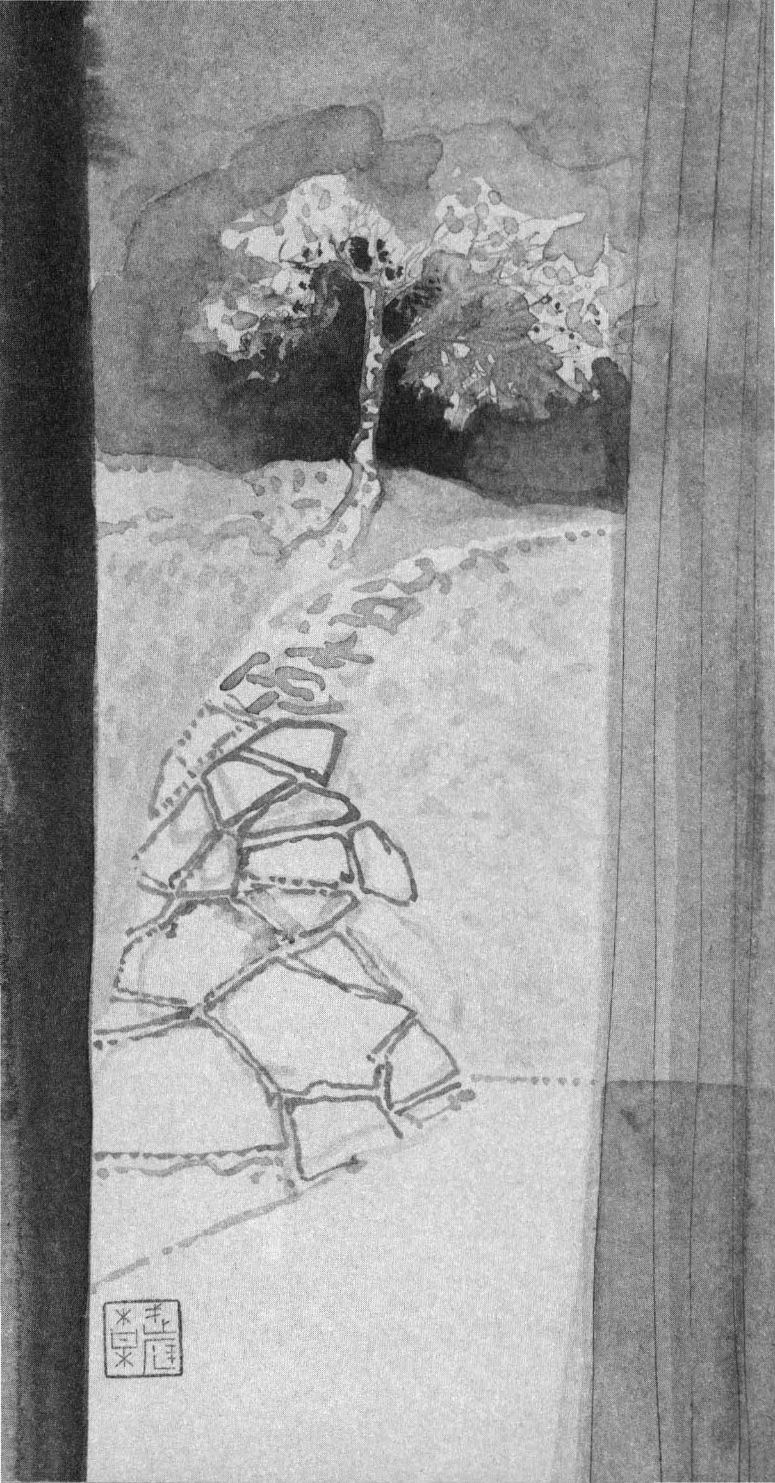
I cannot leave out the problem of life and death. Many young people and others have come out to serve others and to labor for peace, through their love for all who are suffering. They are always mindful of the fact that the most important question is the question of life and death, but often not realizing that life and death are but two faces of one reality. Once we realize that we will have the courage to encounter both of them.

When I was only 19 years old, I was assigned by an older monk to meditate on the image of a corpse in the cemetery. But I found it very hard to take and resisted the meditation. Now I no longer feel that way. Then I thought that such a meditation should be reserved for older monks. But since then, I have seen many young soldiers lying motionless beside one another, some only 13, 14, and 15 years old. They had no preparation or readiness for death. Now I see that if one doesn't know how to die, one can hardly know how to live—because death is a part of life. Just two days ago Mobi told me that she thought at 20 one was old enough to meditate on the corpse. She has only turned 21 herself.

We must look death in the face, recognize and accept it, just as we look at and accept life.

The Buddhist Sutra on Mindfulness speaks about the meditation on the corpse: meditate on the decomposition of the body, how the body bloats and turns violet, how it is eaten by worms until only bits of blood and flesh still cling to the bones, meditate up to the point where only white bones remain, which in turn are slowly worn away and turn into dust. Meditate like that, knowing that your own body will undergo the same process. Meditate on the corpse until you are calm and at peace, until your mind and heart are light and tranquil and a smile appears on your face. Thus, by overcoming revulsion and fear, life will be seen as infinitely precious, every second of it worth living. And it is not just our own lives that are recognized as precious, but the lives of every other person, every other person, every other being, every other reality. We can no longer be deluded by the notion that the destruction of others' lives is necessary for our own survival. We see that life and death are but two faces of Life and that without both, Life is not possible, just as two sides of a coin are needed for the coin to exist. Only now is it possible to rise above birth and death, and to know how to live and how to die. The Sutra says that the Bodhisattvas who have seen into the reality of interdependence have broken through all narrow views, and have been able to enter birth and death as a person takes a ride in a small boat without being submerged or drowned by the waves of birth and death.

Some people have said that if you look at reality with the eyes of a Buddhist, you become pessimistic. But to think in terms of either pessimism or optimism oversimplifies the truth. The problem is to see reality as it is. A pessimistic attitude can never create the calm and serene smile which blossoms on the lips of the Bodhisattvas and all others who obtain the Way.



Six

The Almond Tree in Your Front Yard

I've spoken about the contemplation on interdependence. Of course all the methods in the search for truth should be looked on as means rather than as ends in themselves or as absolute truth. The meditation on interdependence is intended to remove the false barriers of discrimination so that one can enter into the universal harmony of life. It is not intended to produce a philosophical system, a philosophy of interdependence. Herman Hesse, in his novel *Siddartha*, did not yet see this and so his Siddhartha speaks about the philosophy of interdependence in words which strike us as somewhat naive. The author offers us a picture of interdependence in which everything is interrelated, a system in which no fault can be found: everything must fit into the foolproof system of mutual dependence, a system in which one cannot consider the problem of liberation in this world.

According to an insight of our tradition, reality has three natures: imagination, interdependence, and the nature of ultimate perfection. One first considers interdependence. Because of forgetfulness and prejudices, we generally cloak reality with a veil of false views and opinions. This is seeing reality through imagination. Imagination is an illusion of reality which conceives of reality as an assembly of small pieces of separate entities and selves. In order to break through, the practitioner meditates on the nature of interdependence or the interrelatedness of phenomena in the processes of creation and destruction. The consideration is a way of contemplation, not the basis of a philosophic doctrine. If one clings merely to a system of concepts, one only becomes stuck. The meditation on interdependence is to help one penetrate reality in order to be one with it, not to become caught up in philosophical opinion or meditation methods. The raft is used to cross the river. It isn't to be carried around on your shoulders. The finger which points at the moon isn't the moon itself.

Finally one proceeds to the nature of ultimate perfection—reality freed from all false views produced by the imagination. Reality is reality. It transcends every concept. There is no concept which can adequately describe it, not even the concept of interdependence. To assure that one doesn't become attached to a philosophical concept, our teaching speaks of the three *non*-natures to prevent the individual from becoming caught up in the doctrine of the three natures. The essence of Mahayana Buddhist teaching lies in this.

When reality is perceived in its nature of ultimate perfection, the practitioner has reached a level of wisdom called non-discrimination mind—a wondrous communion in which there is no longer any distinction made between subject and object. This isn't some far-off, unattainable state. Any one of us—by persisting in practicing even a little—can at least taste of it. I have a pile of orphan applications for sponsorship on my desk.* I translate a few each day. Before I begin to translate a sheet, I look into the eyes of the child in the photograph, and look at the child's expression and features closely. I feel a deep link between myself and each child, which allows me to enter a special communion with them. While writing this to you, I see that during those moments and hours, the communion I have experienced while translating the simple lines in the applications has been a kind of non-discrimination mind. I no longer see an "I" who translates the sheets to help each child, I no longer see a child who received love and help. The child and I are one: no one pities; no one asks for help; no one helps. There is no task, no social work to be done, no compassion, no special wisdom. These are moments of non-discrimination mind.

**The Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation has carried on a program of raising financial support for families within Vietnam who took in orphans. In the United States the sponsor contributed $6 a month for the family of the orphan he or she was helping.*

When reality is experienced in its nature of ultimate perfection, an almond tree that may be in your front yard reveals its nature in perfect wholeness. The almond tree is itself truth, reality, your own self. Of all the people who have passed by your yard, how many have really seen the almond tree? The heart of an artist may be more sensitive; hopefully he or she will be able to see the tree in a deeper way than many others. Because of a more open heart, a certain communion already exists between the artist and the tree. What counts is your own heart. If your heart is not clouded by false views, you will be able to enter into a natural communion with the tree. The almond tree will be ready to reveal itself to you in complete wholeness. To see the almond tree is to see the way. One Zen Master, when asked to explain the wonder of reality, pointed to a cypress tree and said, "Look at the cypress tree over there."

The voice of the rising tide

When your mind is liberated your heart floods with compassion: compassion for yourself, for having undergone countless sufferings because you were not yet able to relieve yourself of false views, hatred, ignorance, and anger; and compassion for others because they do not yet see and so are still imprisoned by false views, hatred, and ignorance and continue to create suffering for themselves and for others. Now you look at yourself and at others with the eyes of compassion, like a saint who hears the cry of every creature in the universe and whose voice is the voice of every person who has seen reality in perfect wholeness. As a Buddhist Sutra hears the voice of the Bodhisattva of compassion:

The wondrous voice, the voice of the one
who attends to the cries of the world
The noble voice, the voice of the rising
tide surpassing all the sounds of the
world
Let our mind be attuned to that voice.

Put aside all doubt and meditate on the
pure and holy nature of the regarder
of the cries of the world
Because that is our reliance in situations
of pain, distress, calamity, death.

Perfect in all merits, beholding all sentient
beings with compassionate eyes, making
the ocean of blessings limitless,
Before this one, we should incline.

Practice looking at all beings with the eyes of compassion: this is the meditation called "the meditation on compassion."

The meditation on compassion must be realized during the hours you sit and during every moment you carry out service for others. No matter where you go or where you sit, remember the sacred call: "Look at all beings with the eyes of compassion."

There are many subjects and methods for

meditation, so many that I could never hope to write them all down for our friends. I've only mentioned a few, simple but basic methods here. A peace worker is like any one else. She or he must live her own life. Work is only a part of life. But work is life only when done in mindfulness. Otherwise, one becomes like the person "who lives as though dead." We need to light our own torch in order to carry on. But the life of each one of us is connected with the life of those around us. If we know how to live in mindfulness, if we know how to preserve and care for our own mind and heart, then thanks to that, our brothers and sisters will also know how to live in mindfulness.

Meditation reveals and heals

Sitting in mindfulness, both our bodies and minds can be at peace and totally relaxed. But this state of peace and relaxation differs fundamentally from the lazy, semi-conscious state of mind that one gets while resting and dozing. Sitting in such lazy semi-consciousness, far from being mindfulness, is like sitting in a dark cave. In mindfulness one is not only restful and happy, but alert and awake. Meditation is not evasion; it is a serene encounter with reality. The person who practices mindfulness should be no less awake than the driver of a car; if the practitioner isn't awake he will be possessed by dispersion and forgetfulness, just as the drowsy driver is likely to cause a grave accident. Be as awake as a person walking on high stilts—any mis-step could cause the walker to fall. Be like a medieval knight walking weaponless in a forest of swords. Be like a lion, going forward with slow, gentle, and firm steps. Only with this kind of vigilance can you realize total awakening.

For beginners, I recommend the method of pure recognition: recognition without judgment. Feelings, whether of compassion or irritation, should be welcomed, recognized, and treated on an absolutely equal basis; because both are ourselves. The tangerine I am eating is me. The mustard greens I am planting are me. I plant with all my heart and mind. I clean this teapot with the kind of attention I would have were I giving the baby Buddha or Jesus a bath. Nothing should be treated more carefully than anything else. In mindfulness, compassion, irritation, mustard green plant, and teapot are all sacred.

When possessed by a sadness, an anxiety, a hatred, or a passion or whatever, the method of pure observation and recognition may seem difficult to practice. If so, turn to meditation on a fixed object, using your own state of mind as meditation's subject. Such meditation reveals and heals. The sadness or anxiety, hatred or passion, under the gaze of concentration and meditation reveals its own nature—a revelation that leads naturally to healing and emancipation. The sadness (or whatever has caused the pain) can be used as a means of liberation from torment and suffering, like using a thorn to remove a thorn. We should treat our anxiety, our pain, our hatred and passion gently, respectfully, not resisting it, but living with it, making peace with it, penetrating into its nature by meditation on interdependence. One quickly learns how to select subjects of meditation that fit the situation. Subjects of meditation—like interdependence, compassion, self, emptiness, non-attachment—all these belong to the categories of meditation which have the power to reveal and to heal.

Meditation on these subjects, however, can only be successful if we have built up a certain power of concentration, a power achieved by the practice of mindfulness in everyday life, in the observation and recognition of all that is going on. But the objects of meditation must be realities that have real roots in yourselves—not just subjects of philosophical speculation. Each should be like a kind of food that must be cooked for a long time over a hot fire. We put it in a pot, cover it, and light the fire. The pot is ourselves and the heat used to cook is the power of concentration. The fuel comes from the continuous practice of mindfulness. Without enough heat the food will never be cooked. But once cooked, the food reveals its true nature and helps lead us to liberation.

The water clearer, the grass greener

The Buddha once said that the problem of life and death is itself the problem of mindfulness. Whether or not one is alive depends on whether one is mindful. In the Samyutta Nikaya Sutra, the Buddha tells a story which took place in a small village:

A famous dancer had just come to the village and the people were swarming the streets to catch a glimpse of her. At that same moment, a condemned criminal was obliged to cross the village carrying a bowl of oil filled to the very brim. He had to concentrate with all his might on keeping the bowl steady, for even if one drop of oil were to spill from the bowl to the ground, the soldier directly behind him had orders to take out his sword and cut off the man's head. Having reached this point in the story, Gautama Buddha asked: "Now, do you think our prisoner was able to keep all his attention so focused on the bowl of oil that his mind did not stray to steal a glimpse of the famous dancer in town, or to look up at the throngs of villagers making such a commotion in the streets, any of whom could bump into him at any moment?"

Another time the Buddha recounted a story which made me suddenly see the supreme importance of practicing mindfulness of one's own self—that is, to protect and care for one's self, not being preoccupied about the way others look after themselves, a habit of mind which gives rise to resentment and anxiety. The Buddha said, "There once were a couple of acrobats. The teacher was a poor widower and the student was a small girl named Meda. The two of them performed in the streets to earn enough to eat. They used a tall bamboo

pole which the teacher balanced on the top of his head while the little girl slowly climbed to the top. There she remained while the teacher continued to walk along the ground.
"Both of them had to devote all their attention to maintain perfect balance and to prevent any accident from occurring. One day the teacher instructed the pupil: 'Listen, Meda, I will watch you and you watch me, so that we can help each other maintain concentration and balance and prevent an accident. Then we'll be sure to earn enough to eat.' But the little girl was wise and answered, 'Dear master, I think it would be better for each of us to watch ourself. To look after oneself means to look after both of us. That way I am sure we will avoid any accidents and will earn enough to eat.'" The Buddha said: "The child spoke correctly."

In a family, if there is one person who practices mindfulness, the entire family will be more mindful. Because of the presence of one member who lives in mindfulness, the entire family is reminded to live in mindfulness. If in one class, one student lives in mindfulness, the entire class is influenced.

In peace-serving communities, we must follow the same principle. Don't worry if those around you aren't doing their best. Just worry about how to make yourself worthy. Doing your best is the surest way to remind those around you to do their best. But to be worthy requires the continuing practice of mindfulness. That is a certainty. Only by practicing mindfulness will we not lose ourselves but acquire a bright joy and peace. Only by practicing mindfulness will we be able to look at everyone else with the open mind and eyes of love.

I was just invited downstairs for a cup of tea, into an apartment where a friend who helps us has a piano. As Kirsten—who is from Holland—poured tea for me, I looked at her pile of work and said, "Why don't you stop translating orphan applications for a minute and play the piano for me?" Kirsten was glad to put down her work for a moment and sat down at the piano to play a selection of Chopin she has known since she was a child. The piece has several measures which are soft and melodic but others which are loud and quick. Her dog was lying beneath the tea table, and when the music became excited, it began to bark and whine. I knew that it felt uneasy and wanted the music to stop. Kirsten's dog is treated with the kindness one gives to a small child, and perhaps is more sensitive to music than most children. Or perhaps it responded this way because its ears pick up certain vibrations that human ears do not. Kirsten continued to play while trying to console the dog at the same time, but to no avail. She finished and began to play another piece by Mozart which was light and harmonious. Now the dog lay quietly and appeared to be at peace. When Kirsten had finished she came over and sat down beside me and said, "Often when I play a piece of Chopin that is the least bit loud, the dog comes and grabs hold of my pantsleg, trying to force me to leave the piano. Sometimes I have to put her outside before I can continued playing. But whenever I play Bach or Mozart, she is peaceful."

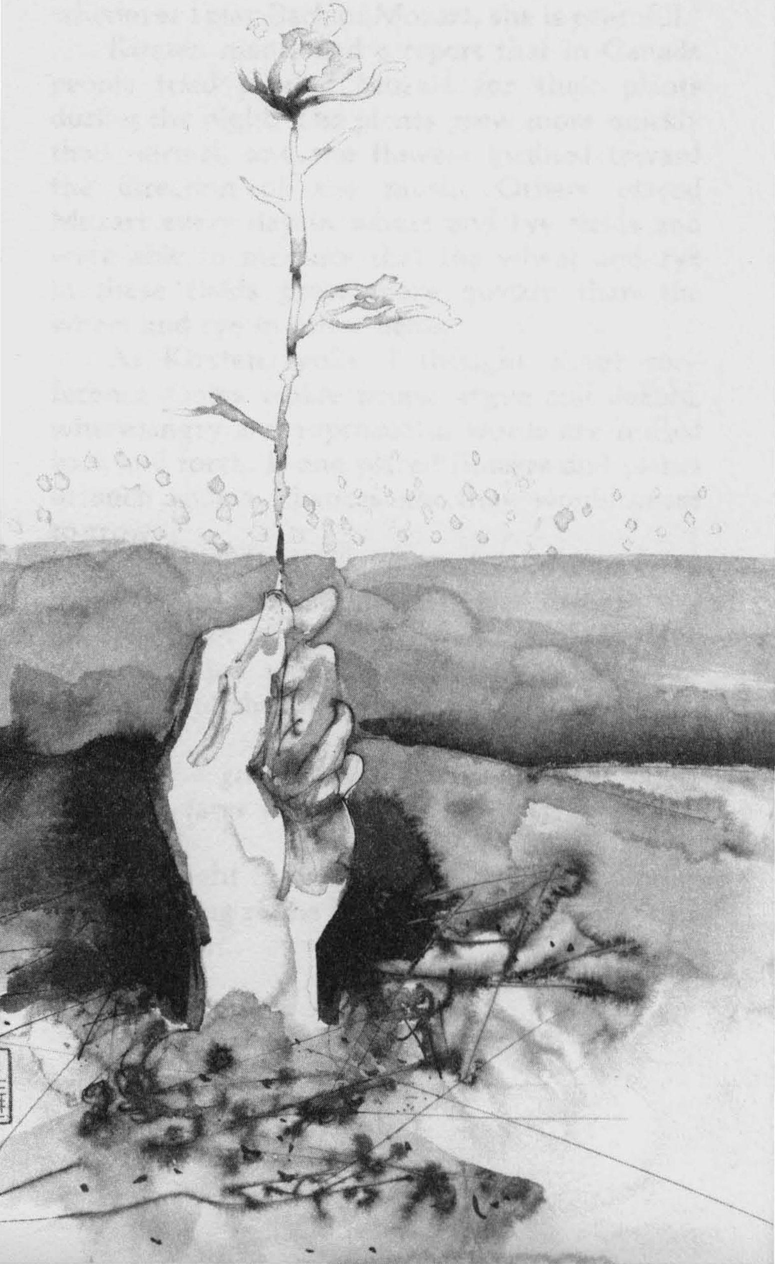
Kirsten mentioned a report that in Canada people tried playing Mozart for their plants during the night. The plants grew more quickly than normal, and the flowers inclined toward the direction of the music. Others played Mozart every day in wheat and rye fields and were able to measure that the wheat and rye in these fields grew more quickly than the wheat and rye in other fields.

As Kirsten spoke, I thought about conference rooms where people argue and debate, where angry and reproachful words are hurled back and forth. If one placed flowers and plants in such rooms, chances are they would cease to grow.

I thought about the garden tended by a monk living in mindfulness. His flowers are always fresh and green, nourished by the peace and joy which flow from his mindfulness. One of the ancients said,

> *When a great Master is born, the water in the rivers turns clearer and the plants grow greener.*

We ought to listen to music or sit and practice breathing at the beginning of every meeting or discussion.



Seven

Three Wondrous Answers

To end, let me retell a short story of Tolstoy's, the story of the Emperor's three questions. Tolstoy did not know the emperor's name . . .

One day it occurred to a certain emperor that if he only knew the answers to three questions, he would never stray in any matter.

> *What is the best time to do each thing?*
> *Who are the most important people to work with?*
> *What is the most important thing to do at all times?*

The emperor issued a decree throughout his kingdom announcing that whoever could answer the questions would receive a great reward. Many who read the decree made their way to the palace at once, each person with a different answer.

In reply to the first question, one person advised that the emperor make up a thorough time schedule, consecrating every hour, day, month, and year for certain tasks and then follow the schedule to the letter. Only then could he hope to do every task at the right time.

Another person replied that it was impossible to plan in advance and that the emperor should put all vain amusements aside and remain attentive to everything in order to know what to do at what time.

Someone else insisted that, by himself, the emperor could never hope to have all the foresight and competence necessary to decide when to do each and every task and what he really needed was to set up a Council of the Wise and then to act according to their advice.

Someone else said that certain matters required immediate decision and could not wait for consultation, but if he wanted to know in advance what was going to happen he should consult magicians and soothsayers.

The responses to the second question also lacked accord.

One person said that the emperor needed to place all his trust in administrators, another urged reliance on priests and monks, while others recommended physicians. Still others put their faith in warriors.

The third question drew a similar variety of answers.

Some said science was the most important pursuit. Others insisted on religion. Yet others claimed the most important thing was military skill.

The emperor was not pleased with any of the answers, and no reward was given.

After several nights of reflection, the emperor resolved to visit a hermit who lived up on the mountain and was said to be an enlightened man. The emperor wished to find the hermit to ask him the three questions, though he knew the hermit never left the mountains and was known to receive only the poor, refusing to have anything to do with persons of wealth or power. So the emperor disguised himself as a simple peasant and ordered his attendants to wait for him at the foot of the mountain while he climbed the slope alone to seek the hermit.

Reaching the holy man's dwelling place, the emperor found the hermit digging a garden in front of his hut. When the hermit saw the stranger, he nodded his head in greeting and continued to dig. The labor was obviously hard on him. He was an old man, and each time he thrust his spade into the ground to turn the earth, he heaved heavily.

The emperor approached him and said, "I have come here to ask your help with three questions: When is the best time to do each thing? Who are the most important people to work with? What is the most important thing to do at all times?"

The hermit listened attentively but only patted the emperor on the shoulder and continued digging. The emperor said, "You must be tired. Here, let me give you a hand with that." The hermit thanked him, handed the emperor the spade, and then sat down on the ground to rest.

After he had dug two rows, the emperor stopped and turned to the hermit and repeated his three questions. The hermit still did not answer, but instead stood up and pointed to the spade and said, "Why don't you rest now? I can take over again." But the emperor continued to dig. One hour passed, then two. Finally the sun began to set behind the mountain. The emperor put down the spade and said to the hermit, "I came here to ask if you could answer my three questions. But if you can't give me any answer, please let me know so that I can get on my way home."

The hermit lifted his head and asked the emperor, "Do you hear someone running over there?" The emperor turned his head. They both saw a man with a long white beard emerge from the woods. He ran wildly, pressing his hands against a bloody wound in his stomach. The man ran toward the emperor before falling unconscious to the ground, where he lay groaning. Opening the man's clothing, the emperor and hermit saw that the man had received a deep gash. The emperor cleaned the wound thoroughly and then used his own shirt to bandage it, but the blood completely soaked it within minutes. He rinsed the shirt out and bandaged the wound a second time and continued to do so until the flow of blood had stopped.

At last the wounded man regained consciousness and asked for a drink of water. The emperor ran down to the stream and brought back a jug of fresh water. Meanwhile, the sun had disappeared and the night air had begun to turn cold. The hermit gave the emperor a hand in carrying the man into the hut where they laid him down on the hermit's bed. The man closed his eyes and lay quietly. The emperor was worn out from a long day of climbing the mountain and digging the garden. Leaning against the doorway, he fell asleep. When he rose, the sun had already risen over the mountain. For a moment he forgot where he was and what he had come here for. He looked over to the bed and saw the wounded man also looking around him in confusion. When he saw the emperor, he stared at him intently and then said in a faint whisper, "Please forgive me."

"But what have you done that I should forgive you?" the emperor asked.

"You do not know me, your majesty, but I know you. I was your sworn enemy, and I had vowed to take vengeance on you, for during the last war you killed my brother and seized my property. When I learned that you were coming alone to the mountain to meet the hermit, I resolved to surprise you on your way back and kill you. But after waiting a long time there was still no sign of you, and so I left my ambush in order to seek you out. But instead of finding you, I came across your attendants, who recognized me, giving me this wound. Luckily, I escaped and ran here. If I hadn't met you I would surely be dead by now. I had intended to kill you, but instead you saved my life! I am ashamed and grateful beyond words. If I live, I vow to be your servant for the rest of my life, and I will bid my children and grandchildren to do the same. Please grant me your forgiveness."

The emperor was overjoyed to see that he was so easily reconciled with a former enemy. He not only forgave the man but promised to return all the man's property and to send his own physician and servants to wait on the man until he was completely healed. After ordering his attendants to take the man home, the emperor returned to see the hermit. Before returning to the palace the emperor wanted to repeat his three questions one last time. He found the hermit sowing seeds in the earth they had dug the day before.

The hermit stood up and looked at the emperor. "But your questions have already been answered."

"How's that?" the emperor asked, puzzled.

"Yesterday, if you had not taken pity on my age and given me a hand with digging these beds, you would have been attacked by that man on your way home. Then you would have deeply regretted not staying with me. Therefore the most important time was the time you were digging in the beds, the most important person was myself, and the most important pursuit was to help me. Later, when the wounded man ran up here, the most important time was the time you spent dressing his wound, for if you had not cared for him he would have died and you would have lost the chance to be reconciled with him. Likewise, he was the most important person, and the most important pursuit was taking care of his wound. Remember that there is only one important time and that is now. The present moment is the only time over which we have dominion. The most important person is always the person you are with, who is right before you, for who knows if you will have dealings with any other person in the future? The most important pursuit is making the person standing at your side happy, for that alone is the pursuit of life."

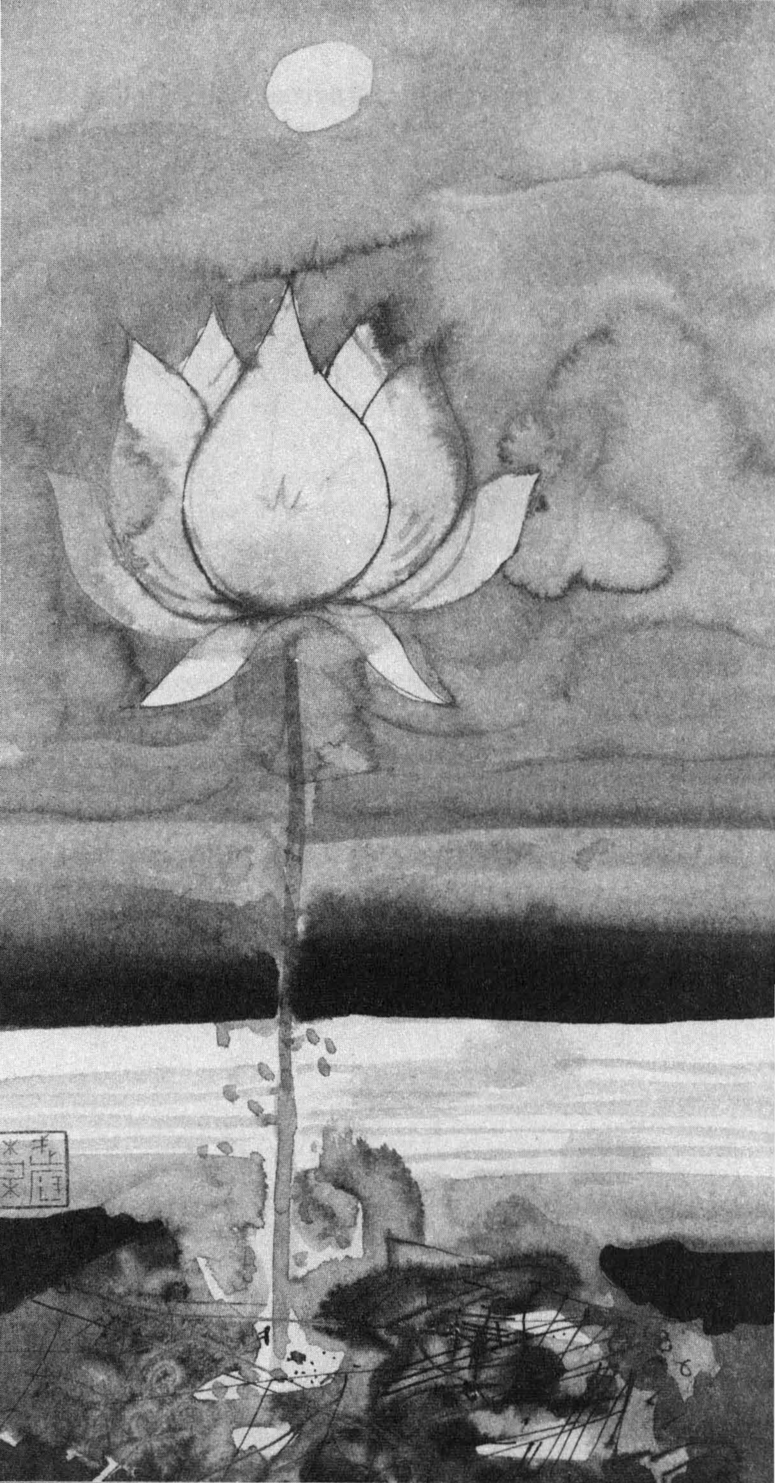
Tolstoy's story is like a story out of scripture: it doesn't fall short of any sacred text. We talk about social service, service to the people, service to humanity, service for others who are far away, helping to bring peace to the world—but often we forget that it is the very people around us that we must live for first of all. If you cannot serve your wife or husband or child or parent—how are you going to serve society? If you cannot make your own child happy, how do you expect to be able to make anyone else happy? If all our friends in the peace movement or of service communities of any kind do not love and help one another, whom can we love and help? Are we working for other humans, or are we just working for the name of an organization?

Service

The service of peace. The service of any person in need. The word service is so immense. Let's return first to a more modest scale: our families, our classmates, our friends, our own community. We must live for them—for if we cannot live for them, whom else do we think we are living for?

Tolstoy is a saint—what we Buddhists would call a Bodhisattva. But was the emperor himself able to see the meaning and direction of life? How can we live in the present moment, live right now with the people around us, helping to lessen their suffering and making their lives happier? How? The answer is this: We must practice mindfulness. The principle that Tolstoy gives appears easy. But if we want to put it into practice we must use the methods of mindfulness in order to seek and find the way.

I've written these pages for our friends to use. There are many people who have written about these things without having lived them, but I've only written down those things which I have lived and experienced myself. I hope you and your friends will find these things at least a little helpful along the path of our seeking: the path of our return.



Exercises in Mindfulness

Here are a number of exercises and approaches in meditation which I often have used, adapting them from various methods to fit my own circumstances and preferences. Select the ones you like best and find the most suitable for your own self. The value of each method will vary according to each person's unique needs. Although these exercises are relatively easy, they form the foundations on which everything else is built.

Half-smile when you first wake up in the morning

Hang a branch, any other sign, or even the word "smile" on the ceiling or wall so that you see it right away when you open your eyes. This sign will serve as your reminder. Use these seconds before you get out of bed to take hold of your breath. Inhale and exhale three breaths gently while maintaining the half smile. Follow your breaths.

Half-smile during your free moments

Anywhere you find yourself sitting or standing, half-smile. Look at a child, a leaf, a painting on the wall, anything which is relatively still, and smile. Inhale and exhale quietly three times. Maintain the half smile and consider the spot of your attention as your own true nature.

Half-smile while listening to music

Listen to a piece of music for two or three minutes. Pay attention to the words, music, rhythm, and sentiments. Smile while watching your inhalations and exhalations.

Half-smile when irritated

When you realize you're irritated, half-smile at once. Inhale and exhale quietly, maintaining the half smile for three breaths.

Letting go in a lying-down position

Lie on your back on a flat surface without the support of mattress or pillow. Keep your two arms loosely by your sides and your two legs slightly apart, stretched out before you. Maintain a half smile. Breathe in and out gently, keeping your attention focused on your breath. Let go of every muscle in your body. Relax each muscle as though it were sinking down through the floor or as though it were as soft and yielding as a piece of silk hanging in the breeze to dry. Let go entirely, keeping your attention only on your breath and half smile. Think of yourself as a cat, completely relaxed before a warm fire, whose muscles yield without resistance to anyone's touch. Continue for 15 breaths.

Letting go in the sitting position

Sit in the half or full lotus, or cross-legged, or your two legs folded beneath you, or even on a chair, your two feet touching the floor. Half-smile. Inhale and exhale while maintaining the half smile. Let go.

Deep breathing

Lie on your back. Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on the movement of your stomach. As you begin to breathe in, allow your stomach to rise in order to bring air into the lower half of your lungs. As the upper halves of your lungs begin to fill with air, your chest begins to rise and your stomach begins to lower. Don't tire yourself. Continue for 10 breaths. The exhalation will be longer than the inhalation.

Measuring your breath by your footsteps

Walk slowly and leisurely in a garden, along a river, or on a village path. Breathe normally. Determine the length of your breath, the exhalation and the inhalation, by the number of your footsteps. Continue for a few minutes. Begin to lengthen your exhalation by one step. Do not force a longer inhalation. Let it be natural. Watch your inhalation carefully to see if there is a desire to lengthen it. Continue for 10 breaths.

Now lengthen the exhalation by one more footstep. Watch to see whether the inhalation also lengthens by one step or not. Only lengthen the inhalation when you feel that it will give delight. After 20 breaths, return your breath to normal. About five minutes later, you can begin the practice of lengthened breaths again. When you feel the least bit tired, return to normal. After several sessions of the practice of lengthened breath, your exhalation and inhalation will grow equal in length. Do not practice long, equal breaths for more than 10 to 20 breaths before returning to normal.

Counting your breath

Sit in the half or full lotus or take a walk. As you inhale, be mindful that "I am inhaling, one." When you exhale, be mindful that "I am exhaling, one." Remember to breathe from the stomach. When beginning the second inhalation, be mindful that "I am inhaling, two." And slowly exhaling, be mindful that "I am exhaling, two." Continue on up through 10. After you have reached 10, return to one. Whenever you lose count, return to one.

Following your breath while listening to music

Listen to a piece of music. Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath, be master of it while remaining aware of the movement and sentiments of the music. Do not get lost in the music, but continue to be master of your breath and your self.

Following your breath while carrying on a conversation

Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath while listening to a friend's words and to your own replies. Continue as with the music.

Following the breath

Sit in a full or half lotus or go for a walk. Begin to inhale gently and normally (from the stomach), mindful that "I am inhaling normally." Exhale in mindfulness, "I am exhaling normally." Continue for three breaths. On the fourth breath, extend the inhalation, mindful that "I am breathing in a long inhalation." Exhale in mindfulness, "I am breathing out a long exhalation." Continue for three breaths.

Now follow your breath carefully, aware of every movement of your stomach and lungs. Follow the entrance and exit of air. Be mindful that "I am inhaling and following the inhalation from its beginning to its end. I am exhaling and following the exhalation from its beginning to its end."

Continue for 20 breaths. Return to normal. After 5 minutes, repeat the exercise. Remember to maintain the half smile while breathing. Once you have mastered this exercise, move on to the next.

Breathing to quiet the mind and body to realize joy

Sit in the full or half lotus. Half-smile. Follow your breath. When your mind and body are quiet, continue to inhale and exhale very lightly, mindful that, "I am breathing in and making the breath-body light and peaceful. I am exhaling and making the breath-body light and peaceful." Continue for three breaths, giving rise to the thought in mindfulness, "I am breathing in and making my entire body light and peaceful and joyous." Continue for three breaths and in mindfulness give rise to the thought, "I am breathing in while my body and mind are peace and joy. I am breathing out while my body and mind are peace and joy."

Maintain this thought in mindfulness from 5 to 30 minutes, or for an hour, according to your ability and to the time available to you. The beginning and end of the practice should be relaxed and gentle. When you want to stop, gently massage your eyes and face with your two hands and then massage the muscles in your legs before returning to a normal sitting position. Wait a moment before standing up.

Mindfulness of the positions of the body

This can be practiced in any time and place. Begin to focus your attention on your breath. Breathe quietly and more deeply than usual. Be mindful of the position of your body, whether you are walking, standing, lying, or sitting down. Know where you walk; where you stand; where you lie; where you sit. Be mindful of the purpose of your position. For example, you might be conscious that you are standing on a green hillside in order to refresh yourself, to practice breathing, or just to stand. If there is no purpose, be mindful that there is no purpose.

Mindfulness while making tea

Prepare a pot of tea to serve a guest or to drink by yourself. Do each movement slowly, in mindfulness. Do not let one detail of your movements go by without being mindful of it. Know that your hand lifts the pot by its handle. Know that you are pouring the fragrant warm tea into the cup. Follow each step in mindfulness. Breathe gently and more deeply than usual. Take hold of your breath if your mind strays.

Washing the dishes

Wash the dishes relaxingly, as though each bowl is an object of contemplation. Consider each bowl as sacred. Follow your breath to prevent your mind from straying. Do not try to hurry to get the job over with. Consider washing the dishes the most important thing in life. Washing the dishes is meditation. If you cannot wash the dishes in mindfulness, neither can you meditate while sitting in silence.

Washing clothes

Do not wash too many clothes at one time. Select only three or four articles of clothing. Find the most comfortable position to sit or stand so as to prevent a backache. Scrub the clothes relaxingly. Hold your attention on every movement of your hands and arms. Pay attention to the soap and water. When you have finished scrubbing and rinsing, your mind and body should feel as clean and fresh as your clothes. Remember to maintain the half smile and take hold of your breath whenever your mind wanders.

Cleaning house

Divide your work into stages: straightening things and putting away books, scrubbing the toilet, scrubbing the bathroom, sweeping the floors and dusting. Allow a good length of time for each task. Move slowly, three times more slowly than usual. Fully focus your attention on each task. For example, while placing a book on the shelf, look at the book, be aware of what book it is, know that you are in the process of placing it on the shelf, intending to put it in that specific place. Know that your hand reaches for the book, and picks it up. Avoid any abrupt or harsh movement. Maintain mindfulness of the breath, especially when your thoughts wander.

A slow-motion bath

Allow yourself 30 to 45 minutes to take a bath. Don't hurry for even one second. From the moment you prepare the bathwater to the moment you put on clean clothes, let every motion be light and slow. Be attentive of every movement. Place your attention to every part of your body, without discrimination or fear. Be mindful of each stream of water on your body. By the time you've finished, your mind should feel as peaceful and light as your body. Follow your breath. Think of yourself as being in a clean and fragrant lotus pond in the summer.

The pebble

While sitting still and breathing slowly, think of yourself as a pebble which is falling through a clear stream. While sinking, there is no intention to guide your movement. Sink toward the spot of total rest on the gentle sand of the riverbed. Continue meditating on the pebble until your mind and body are at complete rest: a pebble resting on the sand. Maintain this peace and joy a half hour while watching your breath. No thought about the past or future can pull you away from your present peace and joy. The universe exists in this present moment. No desire can pull you away from this present peace, not even the desire to become a Buddha or the desire to save all beings. Know that to become a Buddha and to save all beings can only be realized on the foundation of the pure peace of the present moment.

A day of mindfulness

Set aside one day of the week, any day that accords with your own situation. Forget the work you do during the other days. Do not organize any meetings or have friends over. Do only such simple work as house cleaning, cooking, washing clothes, and dusting.

Once the house is neat and clean, and all your things are in order, take a slow-motion bath. Afterwards, prepare and drink tea. You might read scripture or write letters to close friends. Afterwards, take a walk to practice breathing. While reading scripture or writing letters, maintain your mindfulness, don't let the text or letter pull you away to somewhere else. While reading the sacred text, know what you are reading; while writing the letter, know what you are writing. Follow the same procedure as listening to music or conversing with a friend. In the evening prepare yourself a light meal, perhaps only a little fruit or a glass of fruit juice. Sit in meditation for an hour before you go to bed. During the day, take two walks of a half hour to 45 minutes. Instead of reading before you go to bed, practice total relaxation for 5 to 10 minutes. Be master of your breathing. Breathe gently (the breath should not be too long), following the rising, the lowering of your stomach and chest, your eyes closed. Every movement during this day should be at least two times slower than usual.

Contemplation on interdependence

Find a photo of yourself as a child. Sit in the full or half lotus. Begin to follow your breath. After 20 breaths, begin to focus your attention on the photo in front of you. Recreate and live again the five aggregates of which you were made up at the time the photo was taken: the physical characteristics of your body, your feelings, perceptions, mind functionings, and consciousness at that age. Continue to follow your breath. Do not let your memories lure you away or overcome you. Maintain this meditation for 15 minutes. Maintain the half smile. Turn your mindfulness to your present self. Be conscious of your body, feelings, perceptions, mind functionings, and consciousness in the present moment. See the five aggregates which make up yourself. Ask the question, "Who am I?" The question should be deeply rooted in you, like a new seed nestled deep in the soft earth and damp with water. The question "Who am I?" should not be an abstract question to consider with your discursive intellect. The question "Who am I?" will not be confined to your intellect, but to the care of the whole of the five aggregates. Don't try to seek an intellectual answer. Contemplate for 10 minutes, maintaining light but deep breath to prevent being pulled away by philosophical reflection.

Yourself

Sit in a dark room by yourself, or alone by a river at night, or anywhere else where there is solitude. Begin to take hold of your breath. Give rise to the thought, "I will use my finger to point at myself," and then instead of pointing at your body, point away in the opposite direction. Contemplate seeing yourself outside of your bodily form. Contemplate seeing your bodily form present before you—in the trees, the grass and leaves, the river. Be mindful that you are in the universe and the universe is in you: if the universe is, you are; if you are, the universe is. There is no birth. There is no death. There is no coming. There is no going. Maintain the half smile. Take hold of your breath. Contemplate for 10 to 20 minutes.

Your skeleton

Lie on a bed, or on a mat or on the grass in a position in which you are comfortable. Don't use a pillow. Begin to take hold of your breath. Imagine all that is left of your body is a white skeleton lying on the face of the earth. Maintain the half smile and continue to follow your breath. Imagine that all your flesh has decomposed and is gone, that your skeleton is now lying in the earth 80 years after burial. See clearly the bones of your head, back, your ribs, your hip bones, leg and arm bones, finger bones. Maintain the half smile, breathe very lightly, your heart and mind serene. See that your skeleton is not you. Your bodily form is not you. Be at one with life. Live eternally in the trees and grass, in other people, in the birds and other beasts, in the sky, in the ocean waves. Your skeleton is only one part of you. You are present everywhere and in every moment. You are not only a bodily form, or even feelings, thoughts, actions, and knowledge. Continue for 20 to 30 minutes.

Your true visage before you were born

In the full or half lotus follow your breath. Concentrate on the point of your life's beginning—A. Know that it is also the point of beginning of your death. See that both your life and death are manifested at the same time: *this* is because *that* is, this could not have been if that were not. See that the existence of your life and death depend on each other: one is the foundation of the other. See that you are at the same time your life and your death; that the two are not enemies but two aspects of the same reality. Then concentrate on the point of ending of the twofold manifestation—B—which is wrongly called death. See that it is the ending point of the manifestation of both your life and your death.

See that there is no difference before A and after B. Search for your true face in the periods before A and after B.

A loved one who has died

On a chair or bed, sit or lie in a position you feel comfortable in. Begin to take hold of your breath. Contemplate the body of a loved one who has died, whether a few months or several years ago. Know clearly that all the flesh of the person has decomposed and only a skeleton remains lying quietly beneath the earth. Know clearly that your own flesh is still here and in yourself are still converged the five aggregates of bodily form, feeling, perception, mental functionings, and consciousness. Think of your interaction with that person in the past and right now. Maintain the half smile and take hold of your breath. Contemplate this way for 15 minutes.

Emptiness

Sit in the full or half lotus. Begin to regulate your breath. Contemplate the nature of emptiness in the assembly of the five aggregates: bodily form, feeling, perception, mind functionings, and consciousness. Pass from considering one aggregate to another. See that all transform, are impermanent and without self. The assembly of the five aggregates is like the assembly of all phenomena: all obey the law of interdependence. Their coming together and disbanding from one another resembles the gathering and vanishing of clouds around the peaks of mountains. Neither cling to nor reject the five aggregates. Know that like and dislike are phenomena which belong to the assemblage of the five aggregates. See clearly that the five aggregates are without self and are empty, but that they are also wondrous, wondrous as is each phenomenon in the universe, wondrous as the life which is present everywhere. Try to see that the five aggregates do not really undergo creation and destruction for they themselves are ultimate reality. Try to see by this contemplation that impermanence is a concept, nonself is a concept, emptiness is a concept, so that you will not become imprisoned in the concepts of impermanence, non-self, and emptiness. You will see that emptiness is also empty, and that the ultimate reality of emptiness is no different from the ultimate reality of the five aggregates. (*This exercise should* be practiced *only* after the student has thoroughly practiced the previous five exercises. The amount of time will be according to the individual—perhaps one hour, perhaps two.)

Compassion for the person you hate or despise the most

Sit quietly. Breathe and smile the half smile. Contemplate the image of the person who has caused you the most suffering. Regard the features you hate or despise the most or find the most repulsive. Try to examine what makes this person happy and what causes suffering in his daily life. Contemplate the person's perceptions; try to see what patterns of thought and reason this person follows. Examine what motivates this person's hopes and actions. Finally consider the person's consciousness. See whether his views and insights are open and free or not, and whether or not he has been influenced by any prejudices, narrow-mindedness, hatred, or anger. See whether or not he is master of himself. Continue until you feel compassion rise in your heart like a well filling with fresh water and your anger and resentment disappear. Practice this exercise many times on the same person.

Sit in the full or half lotus. Begin to follow your breath. Choose the situation of a person, family, or society which is suffering the most of any you know. This will be the object of your contemplation.

In the case of a person, try to see every suffering which that person is undergoing. Begin with the suffering of bodily form (sickness, poverty, physical pain) and then proceed to the suffering caused by feelings (internal conflicts, fear, hatred, jealousy, a tortured conscience). Consider next the suffering caused by perceptions (pessimism, dwelling on his problems with a dark and narrow viewpoint). See whether his mind functionings are motivated by fear, discouragement, despair, or hatred. See whether or not his consciousness is shut off because of his situation, because of his suffering, because of the people around him, his education, propaganda, or a lack of control of his own self. Meditate on all these sufferings until your heart fills with compassion like a well of fresh water, and you are able to see that the person suffers because of circumstances and ignorance. Resolve to help that person get out of his present situation through the most silent and unpretentious means possible.

In the case of a family, follow the same method. Go through all the sufferings of one person and then on to the next person until you have examined the sufferings of the entire family. See that their sufferings are your own. See that it is not possible to reproach even one person in that group. See that you must help them liberate themselves from their present situation by the most silent and unpretentious means possible.

In the case of a society, take the situation of a country suffering war or any other situation of injustice. Try to see that every person involved in the conflict is a victim. See that no person, including all those in warring parties or in what appear to be opposing sides, desires the suffering to continue. See that it is not only one or a few persons who are to blame for the situation. See that the situation is possible because of the clinging to ideologies and to an unjust world economic system which is upheld by every person through ignorance or through lack of resolve to change it. See that two sides in a conflict are not really opposing, but two aspects of the same reality. See that the most essential thing is life and that killing or oppressing one another will not solve anything. Remember the Sutra's words:

In the time of war
Raise in yourself the Mind of Compassion
Help living beings
Abandon the will to fight
Wherever there is furious battle
Use all your might
To keep both sides' strength equal
And then step into the conflict to reconcile

Vimalakirti Nirdesa

Meditate until every reproach and hatred disappears, and compassion and love rise like a well of fresh water within you. Vow to work for awareness and reconciliation by the most silent and unpretentious means possible.

Detached action

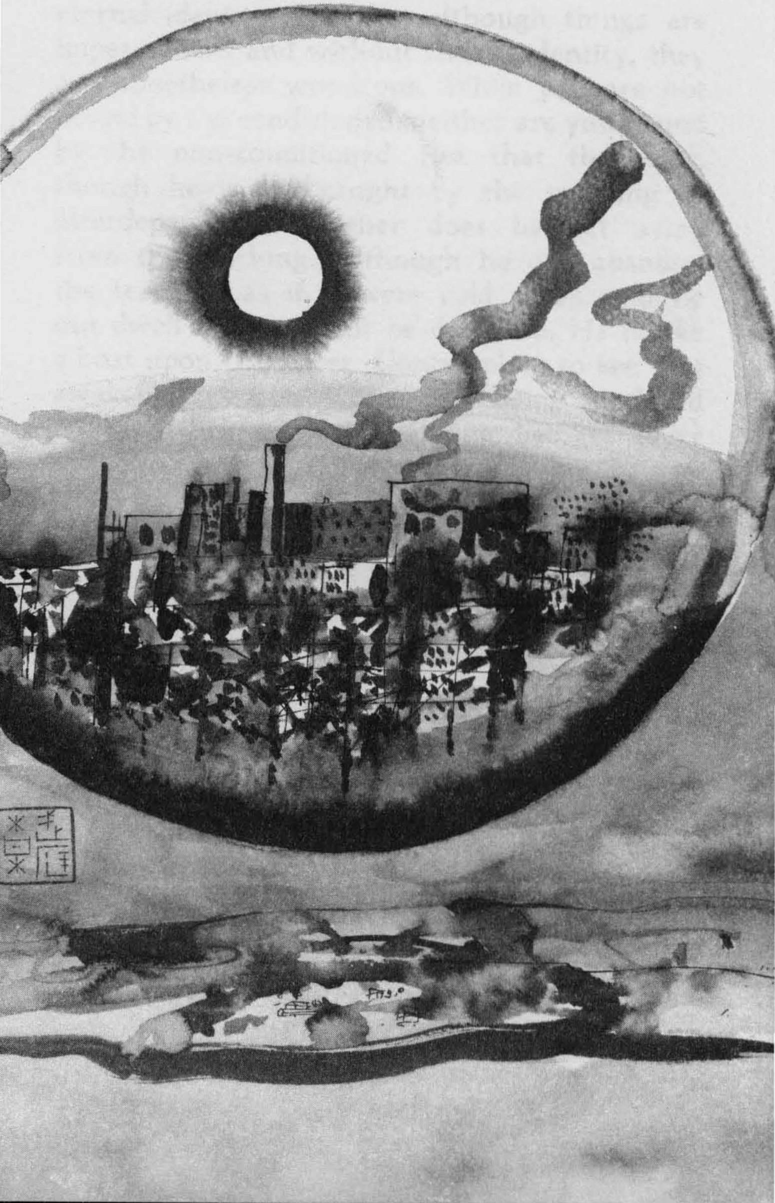
Sit in the full or half lotus. Follow your breath. Take a project in rural development or any other project which you consider important, as the subject of your contemplation. Examine the purpose of the work, the methods to be used, and the people involved. Consider first the purpose of the project. See that the work is to serve, to alleviate suffering, to respond to compassion, not to satisfy the desire for praise or recognition. See that the methods used encourage cooperation between humans. Don't consider the project as an act of charity. Consider the people involved. Do you still see in terms of ones who serve and ones who benefit? If you can still see who are the ones serving and who are the ones benefiting, your work is for the sake of yourself and the workers, and not for the sake of service. The Prajnaparamita Sutra says, "The Bodhisattva helps row living beings to the other shore but in fact no living beings are being helped to the other shore." Determine to work in the spirit of detached action.

Sit in the full or half lotus. Follow your breath. Recall the most significant achievements in your life and examine each of them. Examine your talent, your virtue, your capacity, the convergence of favorable conditions that have led to success. Examine the complacency and the arrogance that have arisen from the feeling that you are the main cause for such success. Shed the light of interdependence on the whole matter to see that the achievement is not really yours but the convergence of various conditions beyond your reach. See to it that you will not be bound to these achievements. Only when you can relinquish them can you really be free and no longer assailed by them.

Recall the bitterest failures in your life and examine each of them. Examine your talent, your virtue, your capacity, and the absence of favorable conditions that led to the failures. Examine to see all the complexes that have arisen within you from the feeling that you are not capable of realizing success. Shed the light of interdependence on the whole matter to see that failures cannot be accounted for by your inabilities but rather by the lack of favorable conditions. See that you have no strength to shoulder these failures, that these failures are not your own self. See to it that you are free from them. Only when you can relinquish them can you really be free and no longer assailed by them.

Contemplation on non-abandonment

Sit in the full or half lotus. Follow your breath. Apply one of the exercises on interdependence: yourself, your skeleton, or one who has died. See that everything is impermanent and without eternal identity. See that although things are impermanent and without lasting identity, they are nonetheless wondrous. While you are not bound by the conditioned, neither are you bound by the non-conditioned. See that the saint, though he is not caught by the teaching of interdependence, neither does he get away from the teaching. Although he can abandon the teaching as if it were cold ashes, still he can dwell in it and not be drowned. He is like a boat upon the water. Contemplate to see that awakened people, while not being enslaved by the work of serving living beings, never abandon their work of serving living beings.



Nhat Hanh: Seeing with the Eyes of Compassion

by James Forest

In 1968, I was traveling with Thich Nhat Hanh on a Fellowship [of Reconciliation] tour during which there were meetings with church and student groups, senators, journalists, professors, business people, and (blessed relief) a few poets. Almost everywhere he went, this brown-robed Buddhist monk from Vietnam (looking many years younger than the man in his forties he was) quickly disarmed those he met.

His gentleness, intelligence, and sanity made it impossible for most who encountered him to hang on to their stereotypes of what the Vietnamese were like. The vast treasury of the Vietnamese and Buddhist past spilled over through his stories and explanations. His interest in Christianity, even his enthusiasm for it, often inspired Christians to shed their condescension toward Nhat Hanh's tradition. He was able to help thousands of Americans glimpse the war through the eyes of peasants laboring in rice paddies and raising their children and grandchildren in villages surrounded by ancient groves of bamboo. He awoke the child within the adult as he described the craft of the village kite-maker and the sound of the wind instruments these fragile vessels would carry toward the clouds.

After an hour with him, one was haunted with the beauties of Vietnam, and filled with anguish at America's military intervention in the political and cultural tribulations of the Vietnamese people. One was stripped of all the ideological loyalties that justified one party or another in their battles, and felt the horror of the skies raked with bombers, houses and humans burned to ash, children left to face life without the presence and love of their parents and grandparents.

But there was one evening when Nhat Hanh awoke not understanding but rather the measureless rage of one American. He had been talking in the auditorium of a wealthy Christian church in a St. Louis suburb. As always, he emphasized the need for Americans to stop their bombing and killing in his country. There had been questions and answers when a large man stood up and spoke with searing scorn of the "supposed compassion" of "this Mr. Hanh."

"If you care so much about your people, Mr. Hanh, why are you here? If you care so much for the people who are wounded, why don't you spend your time with them?" At this point my recollection of his words is replaced by the memory of the intense anger which overwhelmed me.

When he finished, I looked toward Nhat Hanh in bewilderment. What could he—or anyone—say? The spirit of the war itself had suddenly filled the room, and it seemed hard to breathe.

There was a silence. Then Nhat Hanh began to speak—quietly, with deep calm, indeed with a sense of personal caring for the man who had just damned him. The words seemed like rain falling on fire. "If you want the tree to grow," he said, "it won't help to water the leaves. You have to water the roots. Many of the roots of the war are here, in your country. To help the people who are to be bombed, to try to protect them from this suffering, I have to come here."

The atmosphere in the room was transformed. In the man's fury we had experienced our own furies; we had seen the world as through a bomb bay. In Nhat Hanh's response we had experienced an alternate possibility: the possibility (here brought to Christians by a Buddhist and to Americans by an "enemy") of overcoming hatred with love, of breaking the seemingly endless chain reaction of violence throughout human history.

But after his response, Nhat Hanh whispered something to the chairman and walked quickly from the room. Sensing something was wrong, I followed him out. It was a cool, clear night. Nhat Hanh stood on the sidewalk beside the church parking lot. He was struggling for air—like someone who had been deeply underwater and who had barely managed to swim to the surface before gasping for breath. It was several minutes before I dared ask him how he was or what had happened.

Nhat Hanh explained that the man's comments had been terribly upsetting. He had wanted to respond to him with anger. So he had made himself breathe deeply and very slowly in order to find a way to respond with calm and understanding. But the breathing had been too slow and too deep.

"Why not be angry with him," I asked. "Even pacifists have a right to be angry."

"If it were just myself, yes. But I am here to speak for Vietnamese peasants. I have to show them what we can be at our best."

The moment was an important one in my life, one pondered again and again since then. For one thing, it was the first time that I realized there was a connection between the way one breathes and the way one responds to the world around.

Until very recently, Nhat Hanh has made no attempt to teach Western people any of the skills of meditation—what he often calls mindfulness. Only during the past year, first with a few Western friends helping the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation in Paris, later with a group at that city's Quaker International Center, has he begun to teach meditation. Now he has written a small book on the subject, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, a manual on meditation.

Nhat Hanh is a poet, Zen Master, and a co-chairman of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In Vietnam, he played a major role in the creation of "engaged Buddhism"—a profound religious renewal rooted in compassion and service out of which emerged countless projects which combined help to the war's victims with nonviolent opposition to the war itself. For their work, thousands of Buddhists—nuns, monks, and lay people—were shot or imprisoned.

His work in Vietnam gave birth to the School of Youth for Social Service, Van Hanh University, a small monastery that was an early base of the nonviolent movement, a pacifist underground press (led by his co-worker Cao Ngoc Phuong), and the La Boi Press, one of the principal vehicles of cultural and religious renewal.

His poetry provides the words of many of the most popular songs in contemporary Vietnam, songs of hope surviving grief.

Even in exile, representing overseas the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, he has continued to be a force for nonviolence and reconciliation in his homeland and an organizer of supportive responses from other countries. (His friendship with Martin Luther King was a factor in Dr. King's decision to ignore the advice of many colleagues and contributors who opposed his "mixing issues" and to join in the opposition to the Vietnam war. Shortly before his assassination, Dr. King nominated Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Prize for Peace.)

Only a few of his books have been published outside of Vietnam: *Lotus in a Sea of Fire, The Cry of Vietnam, The Path of Return Continues the Journey, Zen Keys,* and *The Raft Is Not the Shore.*

During conversations with Nhat Hanh and his co-workers in Paris, in the apartment of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation, our thoughts turned to the absence of a meditative dimension in much of the American peace movement. Its absence helped explain why so much of the "peace" movement (perhaps better called the American-withdrawal movement) had exhibited such slight and superficial interest in the Buddhists' nonviolent campaign against the war. The weaponless Buddhists were not judged truly "political," merely a religious movement: admirable, unusually courageous when compared to other religious groups, but peripheral.

What American peace activists might learn from their Vietnamese counterparts is that, until there is a more meditative dimension in the peace movement, our perceptions of reality (and thus our ability to help occasion understanding and transformation) will be terribly crippled. Whatever our religious or nonreligious background and vocabulary may be, we will be overlooking something as essential to our lives and work as breath itself.

Breath itself. Breathing. It comes to many as astonishing news that something as simple as attention to breathing has a central part to play in meditation and prayer. It is like a mystery novelist's idea of hiding the diamonds in the goldfish bowl: too obvious to notice. But since the news has made its way past my own barriers of skepticism, there has been no end of confirmations—principally, the confirmation of experience.

The problem with meditation is that the contexts for it are too close at hand. The chances, as Nhat Hanh points out, are scattered everywhere: in the bathtub, in the kitchen sink, on a cutting board, a sidewalk or path, on a tenement staircase, on a picket line, at a typewriter . . . literally anywhere. The moments and places of silence and stillness are wondrous and helpful, but not indispensable. The meditative life doesn't require a secluded, greenhouse existence. (It does need occasional periods of time, even a whole day of the week, when special attention can be given to becoming more mindful. But then Christians and Jews ought not to be newcomers to the Sabbath.)

To the skeptic, Nhat Hanh's suggestions will seem quite absurd, a bad joke at the end of history, the latest card trick dealt out of the ancient deck of mystical doubletalk. But the pacifist affirmation itself strikes many as no smaller an absurdity: choosing to nurture life and to live without weapons in a murderous world. The way of meditation only carries that personal disarmament we have already begun an essential step deeper—nonviolence not only in the face of governments and corporations and liberation armies but a nonviolent encounter with reality itself.

This is the way to understand a simple truth

Nhat Hanh has mentioned elsewhere: "Those who are without compassion cannot see what is seen with the eyes of compassion." That more inclusive sight makes the small but crucial difference between despair and hope.

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Selection of Buddhist Sutras

The Foundation of Mindfulness

(Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta)

Translated from the Pali by Nyānasatta

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was living among the Kurus, at Kammasadamma—a market town of the Kuru people. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Monks," and they replied to him, "Venerable Sir." The Blessed One spoke as follows:

This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nirvāna, namely the four Foundations of Mindfulness. What are the four?

Herein (in this teaching) a monk lives contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating feelings in feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief.

I. The Contemplation of the Body

1. Mindfulness of Breathing

And how does a monk live contemplating the body in the body?

Herein, monks, a monk having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree or to an empty place, sits down, with his legs crossed, keeps his body erect and his mindfulness alert.

Ever mindful he breathes in, and mindful he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows "I am breathing in a long breath"; breathing out a long breath, he knows "I am breathing out a long breath"; breathing in a short breath, he knows "I am breathing in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, he knows "I am breathing out a short breath."

"Experiencing the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe in," thus he trains himself. "Experiencing the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe out," thus he trains himself. "Calming the activity of the (breath-) body, I shall breathe in," thus he trains himself. "Calming the activity of the (breath-) body, I shall breathe out," thus he trains himself.

Just as a skillful turner or turner's apprentice, making a long turn, knows "I am making a long turn," or making a short turn, knows, "I am making a short turn," just so the monk, breathing in a long breath, knows "I am breathing in a long breath"; breathing out a long breath, knows "I am breathing out a long breath"; breathing in a short breath, knows "I am breathing in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, knows "I am breathing out a short breath." "Experiencing the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe in," thus he trains himself. "Experiencing the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe out," thus he trains himself. "Calming the activity of the (breath-) body, I shall breathe in," thus he trains himself. "Calming the activity of the (breath-) body, I shall breathe out," thus he trains himself.

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body internally, or he lives contemplating the body in the body, internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in the body, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution factors in the body. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought: "The body exists," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus also, monks, a monk lives contemplating the body in the body.

2. *The Postures of the Body*

And further, monks, a monk knows when he is going "I am going"; he knows when he is standing "I am standing"; he knows when he is sitting "I am sitting"; he knows when he is lying down "I am lying down"; or just as his body is disposed so he knows it.

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body internally, or he lives contemplating the body in the body externally, or he lives contemplating the body in the body internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in the body, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution factors in the body. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought: "The body exists," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus also, monks, a monk lives contemplating the body in the body.

3. *Mindfulness with Clear Comprehension*

And further, monks, a monk, in going forward and back, applies clear comprehension; in looking away, he applies clear comprehension; in bending and in stretching, he applies clear comprehension; in wearing robes and carrying the bowl, he applies clear comprehension; in eating, drinking, chewing, and savoring, he applies clear comprehension; in attending to the calls of nature, he applies clear comprehension; in walking, standing, in sitting, in falling asleep, in waking, in speaking and in keeping silence, he applies clear comprehension.

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body . . .

4. *The Reflection on the Repulsiveness of the Body*

And further, monks, a monk reflects on this very body enveloped by the skin and full of manifold impurity, from the soles up, and from the top of the head-hair down, thinking thus: "There are in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid, urine."

Just as if there were a double-mouthed provision bag full of various kinds of grain such as hill paddy, paddy, green gram, cow-peas, sesame, and husked rice, and a man with sound eyes, having opened that bag, were to take stock of the contents thus: This is hill paddy, this is paddy, this is green gram, this is cow-pea, this is sesame, this is husked rice. Just so, monks, a monk reflects on this very body enveloped by the skin and full of manifold impurity, from the soles up, and from the top of the head-hair down, thinking thus: "There are in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid, urine."

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body . . .

5. The Reflection on the Material Elements

And further, monks, a monk reflects on this very body, however it be placed or disposed, by way of the material elements: "There are in this body the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire, the element of wind."

Just as if, monks, a clever cow-butcher or his apprentice, having slaughtered a cow and divided it into portions, should be sitting at the junction of four high roads, in the same way, a monk reflects on this very body, as it is placed or disposed, by way of the material elements: "There are in this body the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind."

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body . . .

6. *The Nine Cemetery Contemplations*

And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body dead one, two, or three days; swollen, blue, and festering, thrown in the charnel ground, he then applies this perception to his own body thus: "Verily, also my own body is of the same nature; such it will become and will not escape it."

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body internally, or lives contemplating the body in the body externally, or lives contemplating the body in the body internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in the body, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in the body, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in the body. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought: "The body exists," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives independent, and clings to naught in the world. Thus also, monks, a monk lives contemplating the body in the body.

2. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground, being eaten by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or by different kinds of worms, he then applies this perception to his own body thus: "Verily, also my own body is of the same nature; such it will become and will not escape it."

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body . . .

3. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground and reduced to a skeleton with some flesh and blood attached to it, held together by the tendons . . .

4. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground, and reduced to a skeleton, blood-besmeared and without flesh, held together by the tendons . . .

5. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground and reduced to a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together by the tendons . . .

6. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground and reduced to disconnected bones, scattered in all directions—here a bone of the hand, there a bone of the foot, a shin bone, a thigh bone, the pelvis, spine and skull . . .

7. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground, reduced to bleached bones of conch-like color . . .

8. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground, reduced to bones, more than a year old, lying in a heap . . .

9. And further, monks, as if a monk sees a body thrown in the charnel ground, reduced to bones, gone rotten and become dust, he then applies this perception to his own body thus: "Verily, also my own body is of the same nature; such it will become and will not escape it."

Thus he lives contemplating the body in the body internally, or he lives contemplating the body in the body externally, or he lives contemplating the body in the body internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in the body, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in the body, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in the body. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought: "The body exists," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus also, monks, a monk lives contemplating the body in the body.

II. The Contemplation of Feeling

And how, monks, does a monk live contemplating feelings in feelings?

Herein, monks, a monk when experiencing a pleasant feeling knows, "I experience a pleasant feeling"; when experiencing a painful feeling, he knows, "I experience a painful feeling"; when experiencing a neither pleasant nor painful feeling, he knows, "I experience a neither pleasant nor painful feeling"; when experiencing a pleasant worldly feeling, he knows, "I experience a pleasant worldly feeling"; when experiencing a pleasant spiritual feeling, he knows, "I experience a pleasant spiritual feeling"; when experiencing a painful worldly feeling, he knows, "I experience a painful worldly feeling"; when experiencing a painful spiritual feeling, he knows, "I experience a painful spiritual feeling"; when experiencing a neither pleasant nor painful worldly feeling, he knows, "I experience a neither pleasant nor painful worldly feeling"; when experiencing a neither pleasant nor painful spiritual feeling, he knows, "I experience a neither pleasant nor painful spiritual feeling."

Thus he lives contemplating feelings in feelings internally, or he lives contemplating feelings in feelings externally, or he lives contemplating feelings in feelings internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in feelings, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in feelings, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution factors in feelings. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, "Feeling exists," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus, monks, a monk lives contemplating feelings in feelings.

III. The Contemplation of Consciousness

And how, monks, does a monk live contemplating consciousness in consciousness?

Herein, monks, a monk knows the consciousness with lust, as with lust; the consciousness without lust, as without lust; the consciousness with hate, as with hate; the consciousness without hate, as without hate; the consciousness with ignorance, as with ignorance; the consciousness without ignorance, as without ignorance; the shrunken state of consciousness as the shrunken state; the distracted state of consciousness as the distracted state; the developed state of consciousness as the developed state; the undeveloped state of consciousness as the undeveloped state; the state of consciousness with some other mental state superior to it, as the state with something mentally higher; the state of consciousness with no other mental state superior to it, as the state with nothing mentally higher;

the concentrated state of consciousness as the concentrated state; the unconcentrated state of consciousness as the unconcentrated state; the freed state of consciousness as the freed state; and the unfreed state of unconsciousness as the unfreed.

Thus he lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness internally or he lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness externally, or he lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in consciousness, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in consciousness, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in conousness. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, "Consciousness exists," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached and clings to naught in the world. Thus, monks, a monk lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness.

IV. The Contemplation of Mental Objects

1. *The Five Hindrances*

And how, monks, does a monk live contemplating mental objects in mental objects?

Herein, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five hindrances.

How, monks, does a monk live contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five hindrances?

Herein, monks, a monk, when sense-desire is present, knows, "There is sense-desire in me," or when sense-desire is not present, he knows, "There is no sense desire in me." He knows how the arising of the nonarisen sense-desire comes to be; he knows how the abandoning of the arisen sense-desire comes to be; and he knows how the nonarising in the future of the abandoned sense-desire comes to be.

When anger is present, he knows, "There is anger in me," or when anger is not present, he knows, "There is no anger in me." He knows how the arising of the nonarisen anger comes to be; he knows how the abandoning of the arisen anger comes to be; and he knows how the nonarising in the future of the abandoned anger comes to be.

When sloth and torpor are present, he knows, "There are sloth and torpor in me," and when sloth and torpor are not present, he knows, "There are no sloth and torpor in me." He knows how the arising of the nonarisen sloth and torpor comes to be; he knows how the abandoning of the arisen sloth and torpor comes to be; and he knows how the nonarising in the future of the abandoned sloth and torpor comes to be.

When agitation and scruples are present, he knows, "There are agitation and scruples in me," or when agitation and scruples are not present, he knows, "There are no agitation and scruples in me." He knows how the arising of the nonarisen agitation and scruples comes to be; he knows how the abandoning of the arisen agitation and scruples comes to be; and he knows how the nonarising in the future of the abandoned agitation and scruples comes to be.

When doubt is present, he knows, "There is doubt in me," or when doubt is not present, he knows, "There is no doubt in me." He knows how the arising of the nonarisen doubt comes to be; he knows how the abandoning of the arisen doubt comes to be; he knows how the nonarising in the future of the abandoned doubt comes to be.

Thus he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects externally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in mental objects. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, "Mental objects exist," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus also, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five hindrances.

2. *The Five Aggregates of Clinging*

And further, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five aggregates of clinging.

How, monks, does a monk live contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five aggregates of clinging?

Herein, monks, a monk thinks, "Thus is material form; thus is the arising of material form; and thus is the disappearance of material form. Thus is feeling; thus is the arising of feeling; thus is the disappearance of feeling. Thus is perception; thus is the arising of perception; thus is the disappearance of perception. Thus are formations; thus is the arising of formations; and thus is the disappearance of formations. Thus is consciousness; thus is the arising of consciousness; and thus is the disappearance of consciousness."

Thus he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects externally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in mental objects. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, "Mental objects exist," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus also, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five aggregates of clinging.

3. *The Six Internal and the Six External Sense-Bases*

And further, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the six internal and the six external sense-bases.

How, monks, does a monk live contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the six internal and the six external sense-bases?

Herein, monks, a monk knows the eye and visual forms, and the fetter that arises dependent on both (the eye and forms); he knows how the arising of the nonarisen fetter comes to be; he knows how the abandoning of the arisen fetter comes to be; and he knows how the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter comes to be.

He knows the ear and sounds . . . the nose and smells . . . the tongue and flavors . . . the body and tactile objects . . . the mind and mental objects, and the fetter that arises dependent on both; he knows how the abandoning of the nonarisen fetter comes to be; and he knows how the nonarising in the future of the abandoned fetter comes to be.

Thus, monks, the monk lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects externally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in mental objects. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, "Mental objects exist," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the six internal and the six external sense-bases.

4. *The Seven Factors of Enlightenment*

And further, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the seven factors of enlightenment.

How, monks, does a monk live contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the seven factors of enlightenment?

Herein, monks, when the enlightenment-factor of mindfulness is present the monk knows, "The enlightenment-factor of mindfulness is in me," or when the enlightenment-factor of mindfulness is absent, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of mindfulness is not in me"; and he knows how the arising of the nonarisen enlightenment-factor of mindfulness comes to be; and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of mindfulness comes to be.

When the enlightenment-factor of the investigation of mental objects is present, the monk knows, "The enlightenment-factor of the investigation of mental objects is in me"; when the enlightenment-factor of the investigation of mental objects is absent, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of the investigation of mental objects is not in me"; and he knows how the arising of the nonarisen enlightenment-factor of the investigation of mental objects comes to be, and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of the investigation of mental objects comes to be.

When the enlightenment-factor of energy is present, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of energy is in me"; when the enlightenment-factor of energy is absent, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of energy is not in me"; and he knows how the arising of the nonarisen enlightenment-factor of energy comes to be, and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of energy comes to be.

When the enlightenment-factor of joy is present, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of joy is in me"; and when the enlightenment-factor of joy is absent, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of joy is not in me"; and he knows how the arising of the nonarisen enlightenment-factor of joy comes to be, and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of joy comes to be.

When the enlightenment-factor of tranquility is present, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of tranquility is in me"; when the enlightenment-factor of tranquility is absent, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of tranquility is not in me"; and he knows how the arising of the nonarisen enlightenment-factor of tranquility comes to be, and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of tranquility comes to be.

When the enlightenment-factor of concentration is present, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of concentration is in me"; when the enlightenment-factor of concentration is absent, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of concentration is not in me"; and he knows how the arising of the nonarisen enlightenment-factor of concentration comes to be, and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of concentration comes to be.

When the enlightenment-factor of equanimity is present, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of equanimity is in me"; when the enlightenment factor of equanimity is absent, he knows, "The enlightenment-factor of equanimity is not in me"; and he knows how the arising of the nonarisen enlightenment-factor of equanimity comes to be, and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightment-factor of equanimity comes to be.

Thus he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects externally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in mental objects. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, "Mental objects exist," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects of the seven factors of enlightenment.

5. *The Four Noble Truths*

And further, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the four noble truths.

How monks, does a monk live contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the four noble truths?

Herein, monks, a monk knows, "This is suffering," according to reality; he knows, "This is the origin of suffering," according to reality; he knows "This is the cessation of suffering," according to reality; he knows, "This is the road leading to the cessation of suffering," according to reality.

Thus he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects externally, or he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects internally and externally. He lives contemplating origination-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating dissolution-factors in mental objects, or he lives contemplating origination-and-dissolution-factors in mental objects. Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, "Mental objects exist," to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to naught in the world. Thus, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the four noble truths.

Verily, monks, whosoever practices these four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for seven years, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge (Arhatship), here and now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Nonreturning.

O monks, let alone seven years. Should any person practicing these four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for six years . . . for five years . . . three years . . . two years . . . one year, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge, here and now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Nonreturning.

O monks, let alone a year. Should any person practice these four Foundations on Mindfulness in this manner for seven months . . . for six months . . . five months . . . four months . . . three months . . . two months . . . a month . . . half a month, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge, here and now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Nonreturning.

O monks, let alone half a month. Should any person practice these four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner, for a week, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge, here and now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Nonreturning.

Because of this it is said: "This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nirvāna, namely the four Foundations of Mindfulness."

Thus spoke the Blessed One. Satisfied, the monks approved of his words.

The Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing

(Anāpānasati Sutta)

Translated from the Pali by Nyānaponika

Mindfulness of Breathing, monks, cultivated and regularly practiced, is of great fruit and great benefit. Mindfulness of Breathing, cultivated and regularly practiced, brings to Perfection the four Foundations of Mindfulness. The four Foundations of Mindfulness, cultivated and regularly practiced, bring the seven Factors of Enlightenment to perfection; the seven Factors of Enlightenment, cultivated and regularly practiced, bring wisdom and deliverance to perfection.

And how cultivated and regularly practiced, is Mindfulness of Breathing of great fruit and benefit?

Herein, monks, a monk having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down cross-legged, keeps his body erect and his mindfulness alert. Just mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

I. The First Tetrad (Contemplation of the Body)

1. Breathing in a long breath, he knows, "I breathe in a long breath"; breathing out a long breath, he knows, "I breathe out a long breath."

2. Breathing in a short breath, he knows, "I breathe in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, he knows, "I breathe out a short breath."

3. "Experiencing the whole (breath-) body I shall breathe in," thus he trains himself; "Experiencing the whole (breath-) body I shall breathe out," thus he trains himself.

4. "Calming the bodily function (of breathing) I shall breathe in," thus he trains himself; "Calming the bodily function (of breathing) I shall breathe out," thus he trains himself.

II. The Second Tetrad (Contemplation of Feelings)

5. "Experiencing rapture I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

6. "Experiencing happiness I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

7. "Experiencing the mental functions I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

8. "Calming the mental functions I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

III. The Third Tetrad (Contemplation of the Mind)

9. "Experiencing the mind I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

10. "Gladdening the mind I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

11. "Concentrating the mind, I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

12. "Liberating the mind I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

IV. The Fourth Tetrad (Contemplation of Mind-objects)

13. "Contemplating impermanence I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

14. "Contemplating dispassion I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

15. "Contemplating cessation I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

16. "Contemplating relinquishment I shall breathe in (I shall breathe out)," thus he trains himself.

17. In that way, cultivated and regularly practiced, monks, Mindfulness of Breathing brings great fruit and benefit.

Perfecting the Foundations of Mindfulness

And how cultivated, how regularly practiced brings Mindfulness of Breathing the four Foundations of Mindfulness to perfection?

I. Whenever a monk mindfully breathes in and out a long breath, or a short breath; or when he trains himself to breathe in and out while experiencing the bodily function (of breathing); or while calming that function—at that time, monks, he dwells practicing body-contemplation on the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful; having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. For, breathing in and out, monks, I say, is one of the bodily processes.

II. Whenever the monk trains himself to breathe in and out while experiencing rapture; or while experiencing happiness; or while experiencing the mental functions; or while calming the mental functions—at those times, monks, he dwells practicing feeling-contemplation on feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. For the full attention to breathing in and out, I say, is one of the feelings.

III. Whenever a monk trains himself to breathe in and out while experiencing the mind; or while gladdening the mind; or while concentrating the mind; or while liberating the mind—at that time he dwells practicing mind-contemplation on the mind, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. For one who lacks mindfulness and clear comprehension, I say, cannot develop Mindfulness of Breathing.

IV. Whenever a monk trains himself to breathe in and out while contemplating impermanence, dispassion, cessation, or relinquishment—at that time he dwells practicing mind-object contemplation on mind-objects, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. Having wisely seen the abandoning of covetousness and grief, he looks on with perfect equanimity.

Mindfulness of Breathing, monks, in that way cultivated and regularly practiced, brings the four Foundations of Mindfulness to perfection.

And how do the four Foundations cultivated and regularly practiced, bring the seven Factors of Enlightenment to perfection?

Whenever a monk dwells in the contemplation of body, feelings, mind, and mind-objects, ardent . . . unclouded mindfulness becomes established in him. And when unclouded mindfulness is established in him, at that time the enlightenment-factor "Mindfulness" is initiated in the monk; at that time the monk develops the enlightenment-factor Mindfulness; at that time he gains perfection in the development of the enlightenment-factor "Mindfulness."

Dwelling mindful in that manner, he wisely investigates, examines, and scrutinizes the respective object; and while doing so, the enlightenment-factor "Investigation of Reality" is initiated in the monk; at that time the monk develops the enlightenment-factor "Investigation of Reality"; at that time he gains perfection in the development of the enlightenment-factor "Investigation of Reality."

While he wisely investigates, examines, and scrutinizes that object, unremitting energy is initiated in him. And when the unremitting factor "Energy" is initiated in him, at that time the monk develops the enlightenment-factor "Energy"; at that time he gains perfection in the development of the enlightenment-factor "Energy."

In him possessed of energy unworldly rapture arises. And when in a monk possessed of energy unworldly rapture arises, at that time the enlightenment-factor "Rapture" is initiated in him; at that time the monk develops the enlightenment-factor "Rapture"; at that time the monk gains perfection in the development of the enlightenment-factor "Rapture."

The body and mind of one who is filled with rapture become tranquil. And when the body and mind of one who is filled with rapture become tranquil, at that time the enlightenment-factor "Tranquility" is initiated in him; at that time the monk develops the enlightenment-factor "Tranquility."

The mind of one who is tranquil and happy becomes concentrated. And when the mind of a monk who is tranquil and happy becomes concentrated, at that time the enlightenment-factor "Concentration" is initiated in him; at that time the monk develops the enlightenment-factor "Concentration"; at that time he gains perfection in the development of the enlightenment-factor "Concentration."

On the mind thus concentrated he looks with perfect equanimity. And when looking on his concentrated mind with perfect equanimity, at that time the enlightenment factor "Equanimity" is initiated in him; at that time the monk develops the enlightenment-factor "Equanimity"; at that time he gains perfection in the development of the enlightenment-factor "Equanimity."

The four Foundations of Mindfulness, in that way cultivated and regularly practiced, bring the seven Factors of Enlightenment to perfection.

And how do the seven Factors of Enlightenment, cultivated and regularly practiced, bring wisdom and deliverance to perfection?

Herein, monks, a monk develops the enlightenment-factors Mindfulness, Investigation of Reality, Energy, Rapture, Tranquility, Concentration, and Equanimity, based on detachment, based on dispassion, based on cessation, resulting in relinquishment.

The seven Factors of Enlightenment, in that way cultivated and regularly practiced, bring wisdom and deliverance to perfection.

Thus spoke the Exalted One. Glad in heart the monks rejoiced in the words of the Blessed One.

Contemplation of Thought

From Siksāsamuccaya

Translated from the Sanskrit by Edward Conze

He searches all around for his thought. But what thought? It is either passionate, or hateful, or confused. What about the past, future, or present? What is past that is extinct, what is future that has not yet arrived, and the present has no stability. For thought, Kasyapa, cannot be apprehended, inside, or outside, or in between both. For thought is immaterial, invisible, nonresisting, inconceivable, unsupported, and homeless. Thought has never been seen by any of the Buddhas, nor do they see it, nor will they see it. And what the Buddhas never see, how can that be an observable process, except in the sense that dharmas proceed by the way of mistaken perception? Thought is like a magical illusion; by an imagination of what is actually unreal it takes hold of a manifold variety of rebirths. A thought is like the stream of a river, without any staying power; as soon as it is produced it breaks up and disappears. A thought is like the flame of a lamp, and it proceeds through causes and conditions. A thought is like lightning, it breaks up in a moment and does not stay on. . . .

Searching for thought all round, he does not see it within or without. He does not see it in the skandhas, or in the elements, or in the sense-fields. Unable to see thought, he seeks to find the trend of thought, and asks himself: Whence is the genesis of thought? And it occurs to him that "where there is an object, there thought arises." Is then the thought one thing, and the object another? No, what is the object, just that is the thought. If the object were one thing, and the thought another, then there would be a double state of thought. So the object itself is just thought. Can then thought review thought? No, thought cannot review thought. As the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, so a thought cannot see itself. Moreover, vexed and pressed hard on all sides, thought proceeds, without any staying power, like a monkey or like the wind. It ranges far, bodiless, easily changing, agitated by the objects of sense, with the six sense-fields for its sphere, connected with one thing after another. The stability of thought, its one-pointedness, its immobility, its undistraughtness, its one-pointed calm, its nondistraction, that is on the other hand called mindfulness as to thought.

Not Dwelling on the Nonconditioned

From the Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra

Translated from the Chinese by Nhat Hanh

What does it mean, "not dwelling on the Nonconditioned"? The bodhisattva contemplates the reality of Emptiness but does not take Emptiness as an object of attainment. The bodhisattva practices the reality of Nonappearance and Nonpursuit but does not take Nonappearance or Nonpursuit as an object of attainment. He contemplates the reality of Noncreation but does not take Noncreation as an object of attainment. He meditates on the truth of Impermanence but does not abandon his work to serve and save. He meditates on Suffering but does not reject the world of births and deaths. He meditates on Extinction but does not embrace Extinction. He meditates on Detachment but goes on realizing good things in the world. He meditates on the homeless nature of dharmas but continues to orientate himself toward the Good. He meditates on the reality of Neither-creation-nor-destruction but still undertakes the responsibility in the world of creations and destructions. He meditates on the reality of the

Ultimate but still dwells in the world of interdependent origins. He meditates on Nonaction but continues always his acts of service and education. He meditates on Emptiness but does not abandon Great Compassion. He meditates on the Position of the True Dharma but does not follow a rigid path. He meditates on the Unreal, Impermanent, Unoriginated, Nonpossessed, and Markless nature of dharmas but does not abandon his career concerning merits, concentration, and wisdom. Practicing in that way, the bodhisattva is described as "not dwelling on the Nonconditioned." He has wisdom but does not end his action in the realm of the conditioned; he has compassion but does not dwell in the Nonconditioned; he wants to realize his great Vow but he will not abandon the conditioned world.

The Heart of the Prajñāpāramitā

Translated from the Chinese by Nhat Hanh

The bodhisattva Avalokita, while moving in the deep course of the Perfect Wisdom, shed light on the five aggregates and found them equally empty. After this penetration, he overcame all pain.

"Listen, Sārīputra, form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. The same thing is true with feeling, perception, mental functioning, and consciousness.

"Here, Sārīputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness; they are neither produced nor destroyed, neither defiled nor immaculate, neither increasing nor decreasing. Therefore, in emptiness there is neither form, nor feeling, nor perception, nor mental functioning, nor consciousness; no eye, or ear, or nose, or tongue, or body, or mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touchable, no object of mind, no realm of elements (from sight to mind-consciousness), no interdependent origins (from ignorance to death and decay), no extinction of death and decay, no suffering, no origination of suffering, no extinction, no path, no wisdom, no attainment.

"Because there is no attainment, the bodhisattva, basing on the Perfection of Wisdom, finds no obstacles for his mind. Having no obstacles, he overcomes fear, liberating himself forever from illusion and assault and realizing perfect Nirvāṇa. All Buddhas in the past, present, and future, thanks to this Perfect Wisdom, arrive to full, right, and universal Enlightenment.

"Therefore one should know that the Perfect Wisdom is a great mantra, is the highest mantra, is the unequaled mantra, the destroyer of all suffering, the incorruptible truth. A mantra of Prajñāpāramitā should therefore be proclaimed. It is this: 'Gone, gone, gone to the other shore, gone together to the other shore. O Awakening! All hail!' "

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The Miracle of Mindfulness

It seems so simple and uninteresting — this mental factor of mindfulness. Just be aware of whatever you are doing, saying, or thinking. Just stay present. How more unimaginitive can it be? Yet this simple factor of mindfulness can make a difference in your life. Sometimes the most simple thing can be the most effective and powerful tool in effecting transformation and change in us. It is like the answer is right there starring us in the eyes but we never saw it because we never expected it to be so simple or mundane, we had expected something much more complex, exotic or esoteric. Yet all that we need is just bare awareness, just a simple presence of mind. Strange how the most simple solution is sometimes overlooked!

Mindfulness is something which can be practised at any time and anywhere — that's what makes it so unique. At any moment you can pause and institute mindful awareness of whatever you are doing, saying or thinking. Be it a thought, a mental state or a physical action, one or other of these states could be observed at any moment. Just subjecting yourself to the gaze of mindfulness can bring about a great transformation in yourself. As the ancient teachers say: look within and therein you'll find the answer. Verily, the answer lies within and not without.

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Hello~ WITH LOVE & OTHER MEDITATIONS

Visuddhācāra

From telephone to traffic jam meditation to the ordinary business of eating & drinking, to waking up & sleeping, to moods & mind states, Visuddhācāra shares his understanding of how we can integrate mindfulness & lovingkindness into every facet of our modern life.

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Foreword

Being mindful is not something difficult to do. The difficulty is in remembering to be mindful because we forget again and again. But once we keep practising and keep trying to remember, we find more and more that the mindfulness comes back to us, as if on wings, by itself. It then becomes more and more effortless. We just can't help but being mindful more and more often. In other words we create a new habit — the habit of being mindful; we substitute the old habit of unmindfulness or mindlessness with one of mindfulness or awareness. How wonderful — to be able to be naturally mindful!

Then ours is not just a practice of mindfulness but also of lovingkindness. Every now and then we radiate goodwill towards all beings. *May I/you/he/she/they all be happy*! Even oneself is not excluded and everybody is included. And just consider what a powerful and wonderful combination this is — mindfulness & lovingkindness. Your life will never be the same again with this twin-pronged approach. Talk about the Buddha's twin miracle and this is it. More effective in the long run than a mere display of psychic power.

What's left finally is to integrate the practice into every facet of our life. How, for example, to translate our thoughts of love and goodwill into speech and deeds. How to become an embodiment of love, kindness, and wisdom. Kindness in our eyes, in our face, in our smile, in our warm greeting. Kindness that exudes from our whole being and that is accompanied by a gentle and profound wisdom which understands that all beings seek love & happiness and shun pain & suffering.

In this booklet, Ven. Visuddhācāra shares his understanding of this practice of mindfulness and lovingkindness with a view to encourage all of us to walk the path.

The Three Most Important Things

The three most important things in life are love, kindness and wisdom. If we have made these three values the priorities of our life, then our life will have been well-lived. When we die we can only have happiness when we look back and not regrets. Wealth, fame, power, status, worldly success and pleasures — these are insignificant compared to love, kindness and wisdom. Cultivate the latter. If we spend our life cultivating this trio, our birth and life will have been worthwhile; it will not have been in vain.

Ven. Visuddhācāra is a Buddhist monk of Malaysian nationality. He was born in 1953 on the island of Penang. He has been practising mindfulness meditation since 1982. He presently resides and teaches meditation in Penang besides travelling abroad to conduct retreats.

“Mindfulness is the path to liberation.”
The Buddha

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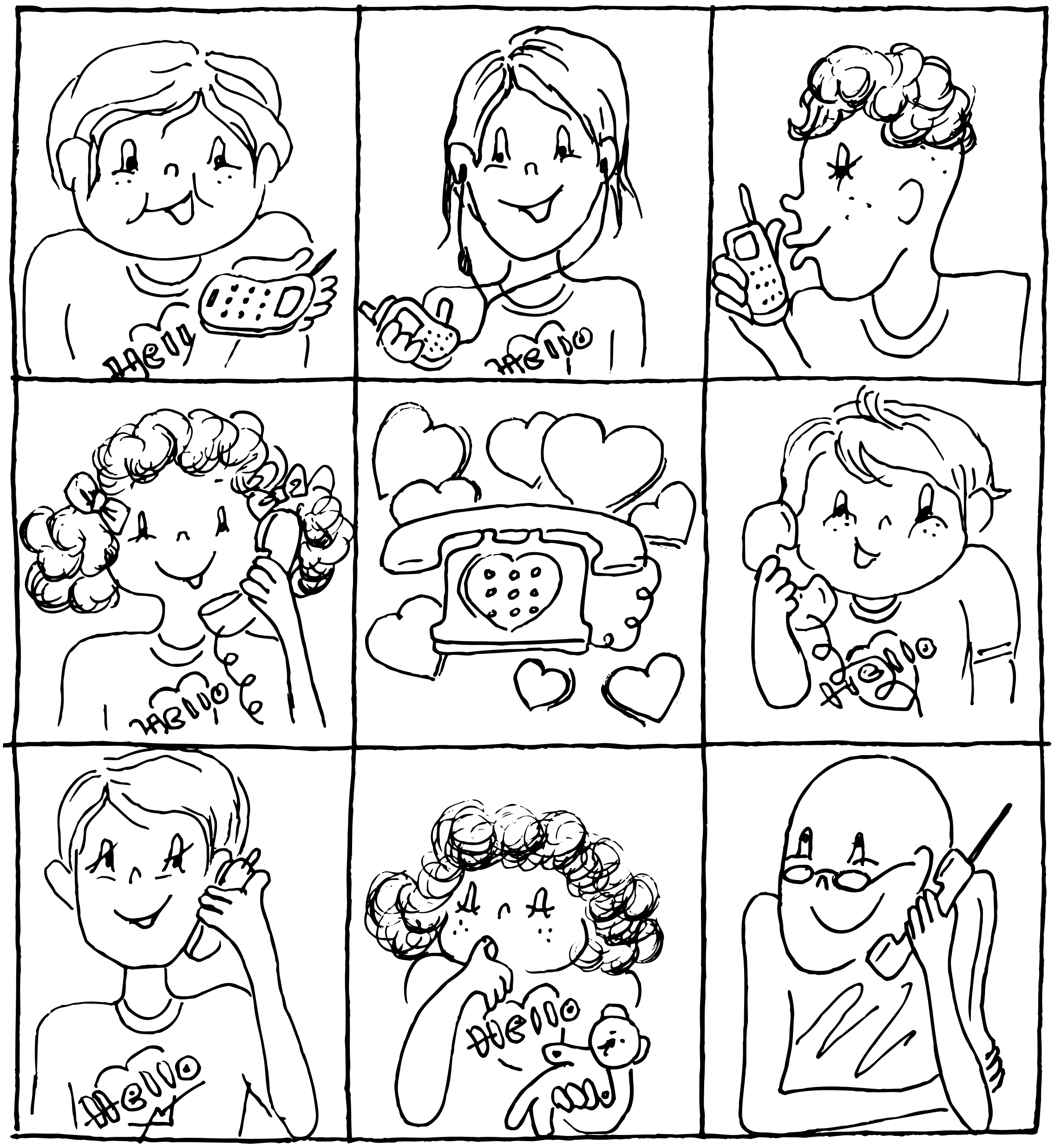
Hello with Love & Other Meditations

Are you in the habit of leaping to answer the phone every time it rings? Do you get a little tensed-up, agitated, excited, nervous, apprehensive, distracted, unfocused, absent-minded, thinking about something, being far away, not present, or whatever, as you reach for the phone?

Leap no more — why not try a more soothing, beneficial and meaningful way of answering the phone? Why not try the mindfulness and lovingkindness way?

This is what you do: The next time the phone rings, don't rush to pick it up immediately. Relax. Take it easy. Come back to the present moment. Allow the phone to ring a few more times. What's the point of rushing? Surely it is good, too, for the person on the other end of the line to slow down a little, to collect himself or herself together, to relax and come back to the breath, to the present moment. Buddha knows all of us need to slow down more than a little, considering that we are all really going much too fast these days, spinning out of control and heading for a sure mental and bodily breakdown.

So, acknowledge the sound of the phone ringing by making a mental note of "hearing, hearing." Then radiate lovingkindness to the person on the other end of the line. Think: may this person whoever he or she is, be well and happy. May he/she be free from harm and danger, free from mental suffering, free from physical suffering, and be able to take care of himself/herself happily. Think along those lines. Send loving thoughts of goodwill and good wishes to that person. Imagine your thoughts flying through the air and sailing right to that person even though you don't know yet who he or she may be.



The better way of answering the phone — with mindfulness and lovingkindness.

Then, even as you are radiating thoughts of goodwill, be somewhat mindful of your intention to pick up the phone. Be aware as you stretch out your hand, as it touches the phone, and as it (the hand) lifts it (the phone) to your ear. Be aware of the sensation of touch between the phone and the ear, the sensation of hardness or pressure, as you press the phone onto your ear.

Be totally absorbed and mindful. Be totally present in this act of answering the phone. Drop everything else from your mind — all the thinking and planning, that is to say, all other extraneous thoughts. Be fully present for the person on the other end of the line. This is, in fact, your gift to the person — the mental waves of good wishes you are sending to him/her and your full presence and attention. What more could he/she ask for? Isn't he/she one lucky caller?

Say 'hello' and be ,fully present as you say it. Say whatever you normally say or deem fit to say, such as 'Good morning.... Yes, can I help you?' Be totally absorbed in your conversation. Don't be distracted by extraneous thoughts. Answer and respond naturally. Be concentrated, focused, but relaxed. Speak from your heart. Speak gently, kindly, calmly, sincerely, truthfully.

If you fumble and cannot find the right words sometimes, it is okay. This is natural. How can we be smooth and perfect in our speech all the time? So, when you are stuck, just try to recollect yourself and say whatever you deem fit in whatever way you know how. Don't get upset. Learn to shrug off your slips and to laugh at yourself. Have a good sense of humour. Nevertheless, if you feel embarrassed for whatever slip you have made, then note 'embarrassment', that is, be aware of this feeling of embarrassment. Mindfulness is about acknowledging whatever is there, and keeping going as best you can. If you feel you are going too fast, talking too fast, then slow down a little and try to re-compose yourself. You can do so by coming back to your breath, being aware of your breathing in and out, or being aware of some sensation in your body.

As you speak, even as you are fully or quite absorbed in your speaking, you can be aware from time to time of bodily sensations, such as of the phone pressing against your ear, your hand on the phone, the buttocks on your seat, etc. You can even send quick flashes of good wishes to the caller, thinking: "May he/she be happy."

You may be wondering how you can (1) be absorbed in your conversation, (2) be aware of your bodily sensations and (3) radiate good wishes all at the same time. How can you do three things at the same time? You may be surprised but yes, this can be done. Maybe not at exactly the same time, but very close to it — what we call in Buddhist psychology "the serial present." This is because the mind is very very fast — faster than even the speed of light. It just takes less than a fraction of a second for it to flit now and then to your bodily sensations, radiate goodwill, and even notice the thoughts that arise even as you speak. The mind can also notice its own state — whether it is concentrated or distracted, calm or excited, happy or sad, annoyed or not annoyed and so on. It can go so fast that it appears that it is all happening at the same time. Just like when we are seeing and hearing. We think they are occurring at the same time, but actually they are occurring at different times, i.e., when we see we don't hear, and when we hear we don't see; but because the mind is arising and passing away so fast — first a seeing consciousness arises and passes away, then a hearing consciousness arises and passes away, then back to seeing, then hearing, so fast that we think it is all going on at the same time. And this is what is called the serial present — a series of events occurring so fast one after another that they can be considered practically to be happening in the present moment, like well within the duration of a second.

You may ask what is the purpose of being aware from time to time of your bodily sensations as you speak. Why can't you just focus on the conversation only? Why purposely distract yourself by noticing bodily sensations? What good can this achieve? Again, you'll be surprised to find that bringing your mind back to body awareness is helpful. It enables you to stay more composed and centred. You'll be more steady, collected, and calm. Try it and find out for yourself whether this is true or not.

For example, even now as I'm typing on my computer, I can be aware of my fingers typing away on the key-tops, my feet resting on the slightly cold parquet floor, and a slight discomfort in my back. So even as I type I can be aware of bodily sensations that are occurring — not all the time, of course, but some of the time. In fact, in everything that I do, it is my practice to be aware of bodily movements and sensations as much of the time as possible. For example, if I bend down to pick up something, I will notice my intention to bend and the bending of the body that follows. If I were to get up from my seat, I will notice my intention to get up and then get up mindfully, aware of the body raising up. Similarly when I sit down I'm aware of the intention to sit and the lowering of the body that follows. There are a thousand and one things that I try to be mindful of as I do them, such as when I open or close a door — any door including car door, room door, bathroom door, toilet door, main house entrance door, fridge door; when I switch on and off a light, turn on or off a tap, wash a plate or cup, slip on a slipper, sweep the floor, eat, drink, bathe, wash face, brush teeth, urinate, defecate, change, scratch, etc. In fact, everything and anything one does can be done with mindfulness, can be turned into an exercise in mindfulness. Even if one is seated not doing anything, one can still be mindful of the sensations that are always present in the body, such as the contact between the buttocks and seat, the arms on the arm-rests or on your lap, your back on the back rest, your feet on the floor, your in-breath and out-breath, the state of your mind, and so on.

Now, I must make it clear that I'm not saying that I'm always mindful, that I'm always aware as I do all the aforementioned and other things. What I'm saying is that I try to do everything with mindfulness as much of the time as possible. But there are, no doubt, many lapses on my part, many times when I forget, many times when I'm just on automatic pilot. But because I'm now and then making an effort to remember, I do often regain my mindfulness. So whenever I remember, I have at that time effectively re-instated my mindfulness. You, too, can do the same if you make an effort to remember to be mindful now and then. Believe me, it is not too difficult, it can be done if you keep trying, keep making a habit of coming back to the present and being mindful of something or other — your body or your mind.

Back to the question: how does being mindful in this way help? Well, most of the time our mind is flitting about here and there as we go about our daily chores. A lot of random thoughts arise and pass away. The mind gets caught in worry, anxiety, frustration, tension, strong craving, anger, aversion, envy, jealousy, delusion, and various unwholesome states. Now, if we can be more aware of our body movements and sensations, the tendency of the mind to run all over the place and be caught in unwholesome states is checked or reduced. In this way we'll be conserving a lot of mental energy that is dissipated when we are thinking unnecessarily or excessively or when we are caught in unwholesome mental states such as worry and anxiety. There will then be more quality in our planning or thinking which will be more focused and purposeful. Also, as we are with the body, when the mind runs, we can notice that too, and bring the mind back to centre. We can notice the kind of extraneous thoughts and activities that occur in the mind. We can come to understand ourselves better this way, and we can choose which train of thought to pursue and which not to.

Also, as we become more mindful of our body movements, we find that we become more composed and graceful. There is an over-all calming effect on both mind and body and this, in turn, is good for both our bodily and mental health. We'll become more relaxed, our heart rate will slow down, our blood pressure will go down, our immune system will be boosted, and we won't suffer from stomach ulcers and other ailments that are caused by worry and anxiety. In fact, mindfulness is an antidote for stress. It is especially helpful for our modern and hectic lifestyle. It helps to slow us down and to reduce stress.

So these are some of the benefits that can be gained from practising mindfulness of the body and mind. The proof of the pudding is, as they say, in the eating. So the best thing is for one to give it a try, i.e., practise mindfulness for a period of time, and see whether it is helpful as claimed.

◆

Now coming back to telephone meditation, you can also be aware as you are speaking, whether you are practising right speech or not. You can see whether you are speaking with honesty and sincerity or not, whether you may be mis-representing or deceiving or slandering, whether you may be speaking harshly with anger, malice or ill will, or whether you are speaking nonsense or frivolously. So if you feel your speech is not wholesome, skilful, or beneficial, you can rein in and correct yourself accordingly.

After the conversation, you can put the phone down mindfully, being aware of the sensations in your arm or hand as you place the phone back on its holder. In life we always want to encourage, comfort, help, inspire and uplift. So it is good if you can end every conversation feeling that you have done just that for the person who called.

Just as you are mindful when you answer the phone, you can do the same when you make a call. The same principles apply, being aware of all the movements involved — stretching out the hand, picking up the phone, pressing the buttons, radiating goodwill (May she be happy) to the person you are calling, and so on.

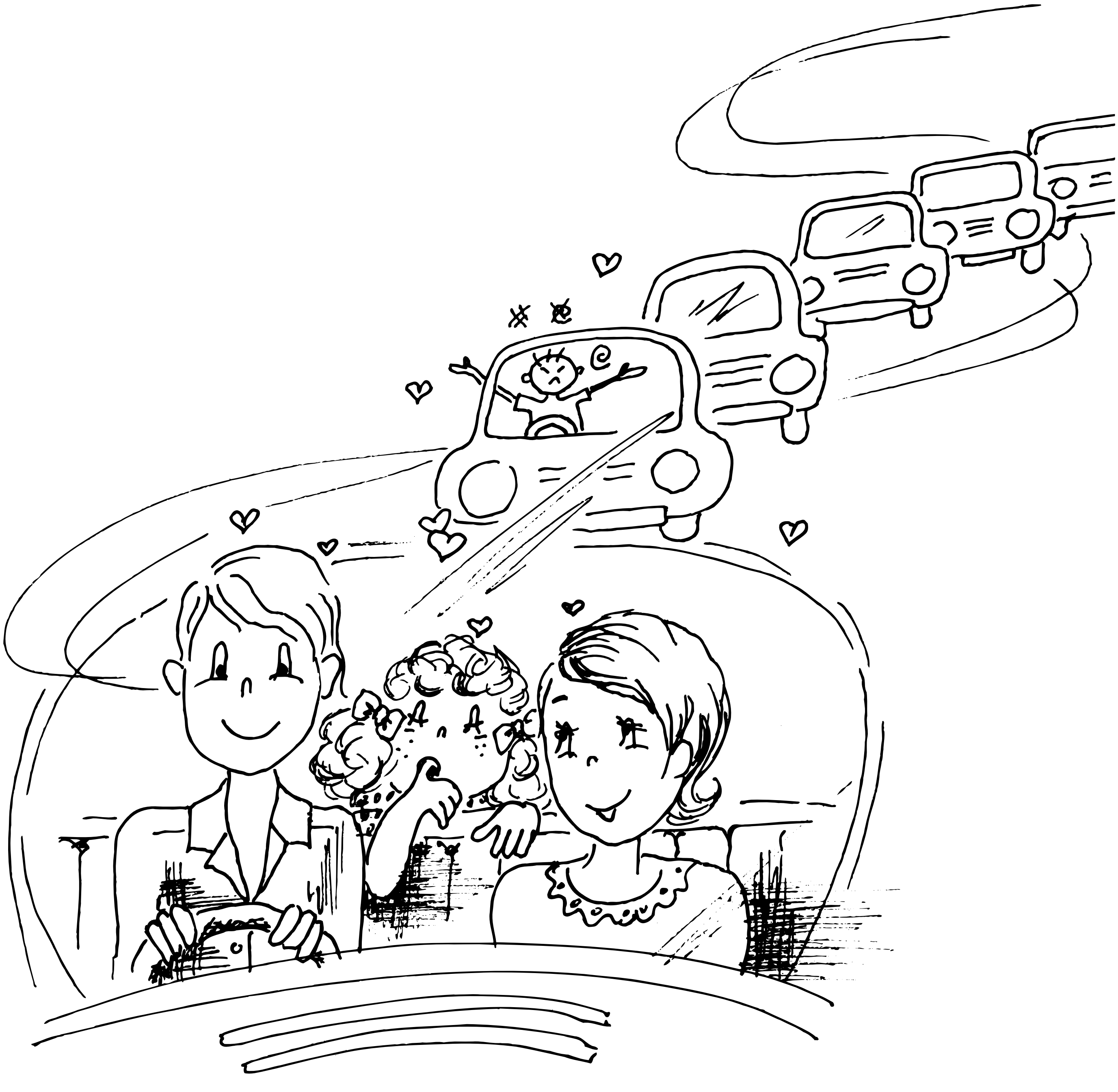
Perhaps you might say you have too many phone calls to attend to, and you just can't be mindful in this way for every call. But then how do you know if you don't try? You'll never know, you know. If you practise at it often and diligently enough, you'll find that it might just become your second nature to respond in this way. You might find it more difficult to be unmindful than to be mindful! And wouldn't it be wonderful then? But okay, even if you can't remember to be mindful all the time, can't you, at least, be mindful some of the time? Surely you can! So you can, at least, practise being mindful some of the time, if not all the time. But as we have said, if you practise mindfulness consistently, it will become a habit. You'll find that you can't help but be more and more aware. So it's a matter of re-conditioning the mind, replacing a mindless habit with a mindful one.

♥♥♥

Traffic Jam Meditation

Let's look at more instances where mindfulness can be applied. When you are caught in a traffic jam, instead of getting uptight and tense, apply mindfulness. Be aware of your mind and body. Observe the sensations in the body. Notice your breath — both in and out. Be aware of your sitting posture, feel the contact between buttocks and seat, and between back and back-rest. Sensations of warmth and pressure in those areas of contact can be felt and noted. Feel your hands on your steering wheel. Observe your mind, too, and notice its tense, edgy, impatient, agitated, disturbed, or whatever state. You'll be surprised that such simple awareness can produce a calming effect. You'll feel a little bit more relax, a little less tense. Then, if you maintain your mindfulness, observing say your in-breath and out-breath, you'll loosen up further and will relax even more.

Then you can also radiate loving-kindness which you must remember is something you can practise any time anywhere. So here in the traffic jam, you can radiate thoughts of goodwill to all around you. You can think any wholesome thoughts you like such as, "May all beings be happy. May they be peaceful. May they be healthy. May they be wise, enlightened, free from suffering, live in peace and harmony, free from such traffic jams, not get angry, and so on." You can keep repeating and radiating such thoughts to all those people who are caught in the traffic jam, to all those people around you out there, and to the passengers that may be in your car. And to anybody else you may think of, such as your loved ones or friends. Or just to all beings at large throughout the whole universe. And, of course, you can also direct those thoughts to yourself, wishing the same for yourself.



Traffic Jam Meditation

Keeping cool and radiating love:
“May all those who are caught,
like me, in this jam be happy.
May they keep cool and not get angry.
May all beings be happy and live in peace & harmony.”

Such wholesome thoughts are healthy for both your mind and body. One should never underestimate the power of the mind.

Studies have shown that such thoughts can have a soothing and calming influence not only on us but even on people out there, for our mental vibrations do have an effect on others whether we realize it or not. Remember also that distance is no barrier to the mind. Those persons out there, even though they may be far far away across the ocean, might be receiving your good vibes, might be feeling or picking them up. Besides, you are also putting yourself in a good frame of mind when you radiate loving thoughts.

♥♥♥

Eating Meditation

Ever heard of eating meditation? Now for those of you who are unfamiliar with the mindfulness practice, I can imagine you saying, "What is he coming up with now?! First it was telephone meditation, then traffic jam meditation, and now eating meditation! What else will be next? It's getting more and more preposterous!" But really, this shouldn't come as a surprise any more. Anything and everything can be meditated upon, can be turned into an exercise of mindfulness, an object of mindful attention.

So, how can you be mindful when you eat? First you can notice the food that is laid before you and mentally say or label "seeing, seeing," as you look at it. This means you are acknowledging the act or process of seeing. If you don't wish to label and prefer to just know that you are "seeing" without making a mental label, you may do so, too. Though labelling is optional you will find it very useful sometimes: it can help to focus the mind on the object. After noting "seeing, seeing," you can observe your mind — the desire to reach for the food, the craving perhaps for pleasant taste. Then you can note the intention to stretch out your hand and you can stretch it out mindfully, aware of the sensations that are arising and passing away in the stretching of that hand. You can be mindful as you scoop up the food with your spoon and bring it to your plate, or as you bring the food from the plate to the mouth. You can be mindful as you put the food into your mouth and as you taste and chew. You can be mindful as you chew, noting as "chewing, chewing", and you can be aware of the taste as spicy, salty, sour, sweet, etc. You can also classify the taste as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Usually the food is pleasant to you, so you can note as pleasant. If you happen to taste something unpleasant, you can acknowledge accordingly as unpleasant. Or if you find the taste neither pleasant nor unpleasant, you can note it as such, a neutral sensation. As you chew, you might notice the taste becoming more and more neutral. You can also take note of the mental reaction towards the taste. You can notice the craving and attachment to pleasant taste and aversion towards the unpleasant taste. And you can try to be more equanimous and composed — to neither crave for the pleasant or be averse towards the unpleasant. This is, however, a rather difficult thing to do, to maintain equanimity, but it is challenging and can be done.

What should be our attitude towards eating? Why should we not crave for delicious food? Because craving is a cause of suffering. Because we don't want to be addicted to sensual pleasures, or to be enslaved by sensual craving. Because we want to seek a higher and more noble state of mind, one that is freed from sensual craving. So our attitude is one of eating to live, not living to eat. Thus we eat to salve hunger, to stay healthy, so we can live a more useful and beneficial life. So we should eat wholesome food suitable for our health rather than food that may be tasty but harmful to our health. Having said this, we do acknowledge that all of us still have craving for taste, and it is not easy for us to check or cut off this craving. So what we can do is to try, at least, to weaken or moderate the craving even if we can't cut it off completely. You'll be surprised too that when you apply mindfulness to eating, there will be instances when you find your craving abating. With the right attitude and intention, we will gradually weaken our craving and it is possible that there will come a time when we will cut it off completely. Buddha and *arhants** have no more craving whatsoever, either for sensual pleasures or for being. They have no fear of death and they do not cling even to life. Furthermore, they know that when they die, they will make an end of suffering, because for them there will be no more rebirth.

Coming back to eating, when you chew, you can note as "chewing, chewing," and be aware of that chewing process, of the movements of the teeth, mouth, and tongue. And as you swallow you can note as swallowing, swallowing, and feel the food going down your gullet or oesophagus tube to the stomach. You can be mindful of your intention to get more food, and once again you can be aware of all the movements and sensations involved in stretching out the hand for the food, and in bringing it to the mouth. You will try to slow down a little rather than eat in a great hurry. Eating as people normally do in a hurry because they are rushing to do something else, or because they are eager to taste more of the food, is really not good for the digestion. Because of inadequate chewing, it is harder for the stomach to digest the food. So slowing down to chew, and chewing more mindfully, purposefully, and thoroughly, will aid digestion and contribute to one's bodily health and comfort.

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*Arahants are those who, following the teaching of the Buddha, have uprooted greed, hatred, and delusion.

Also while eating or doing something one can catch oneself and ask the question, "With what mind am I doing this? With what mind am I eating?" Is there much greed for the food, craving for and attachment to taste? Or is the mind thinking about something else while eating? Then if there is craving or greed, we can try to correct ourselves, to eat more calmly and mindfully, with less greed. And if the mind is busy thinking, planning, or day-dreaming while eating, we can bring it back to the present moment and try to be more mindful of the eating processes.

Then there is, also the question of gratitude. Especially for me as a monk who is dependent on others for my food and other requisites. There is that sense of indebtedness and gratitude for the kindness and support one receives. This will spur one to practise more diligently in order to be worthy of the support of the people. Furthermore, if one is able to, one will try to teach or share with others what one knows of the Dhamma. And one can also radiate thoughts of lovingkindness towards one's benefactors, wishing that they maybe always well and happy.

Lay persons too can feel gratitude and appreciation for the food they receive and for the many blessings that come their way in life. They can resolve in return to practise the Dhamma to purify their minds and to serve the community in whatever way they can. As one is eating one can also radiate thoughts of goodwill (May he/she/they be happy….) to all those that may be around one.

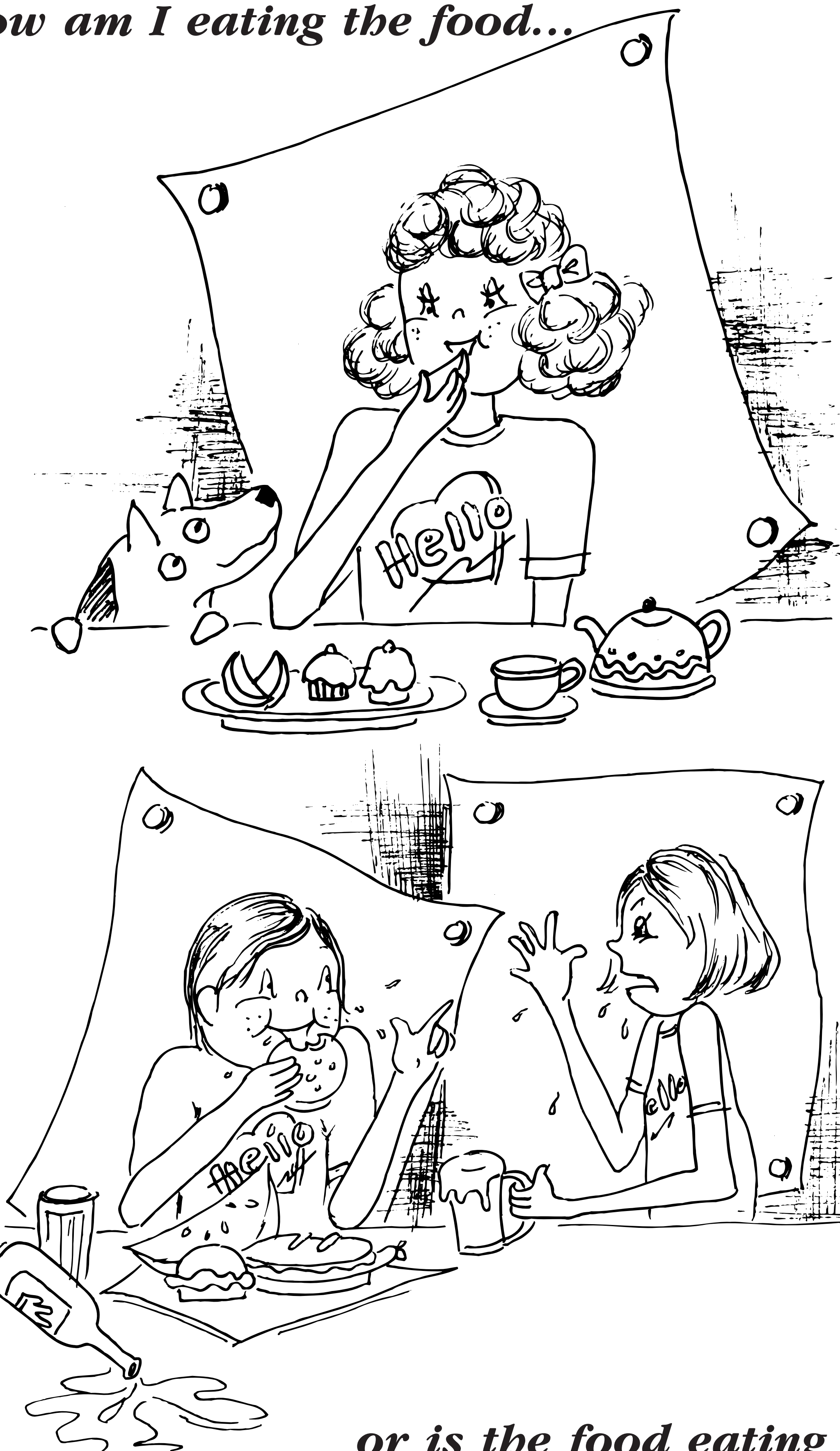
Most people take three meals a day — breakfast, lunch, and dinner — besides tea or some snacks in between. So there is much opportunity to apply mindfulness when eating. It is a good practice for reasons we have already mentioned above. Whenever we eat unmindfully and greedily, it is more like the food is eating us than we are eating it! So sometimes we ask, tongue in cheek, are you eating the food or is the food eating you?

♥♥♥

And Drinking, Too

Yes, and the same goes for drinking. We can be mindful as we stretch out the hand to bring the cup or glass to our lips, as the hand touches the cup, as we lift and bring it to the lips, as we tilt the cup and drink, as we taste the contents, and as we swallow. And as we take more sips and as we put the cup back on the saucer or table. Of course, as regards drinks, one should avoid alcohol which is harmful to both mind and body. We should strive to keep our mind pure, clear, alert, mindful and not confused for as much of the time as possible.

Now am I eating the food…


Hello
Hello
Hello

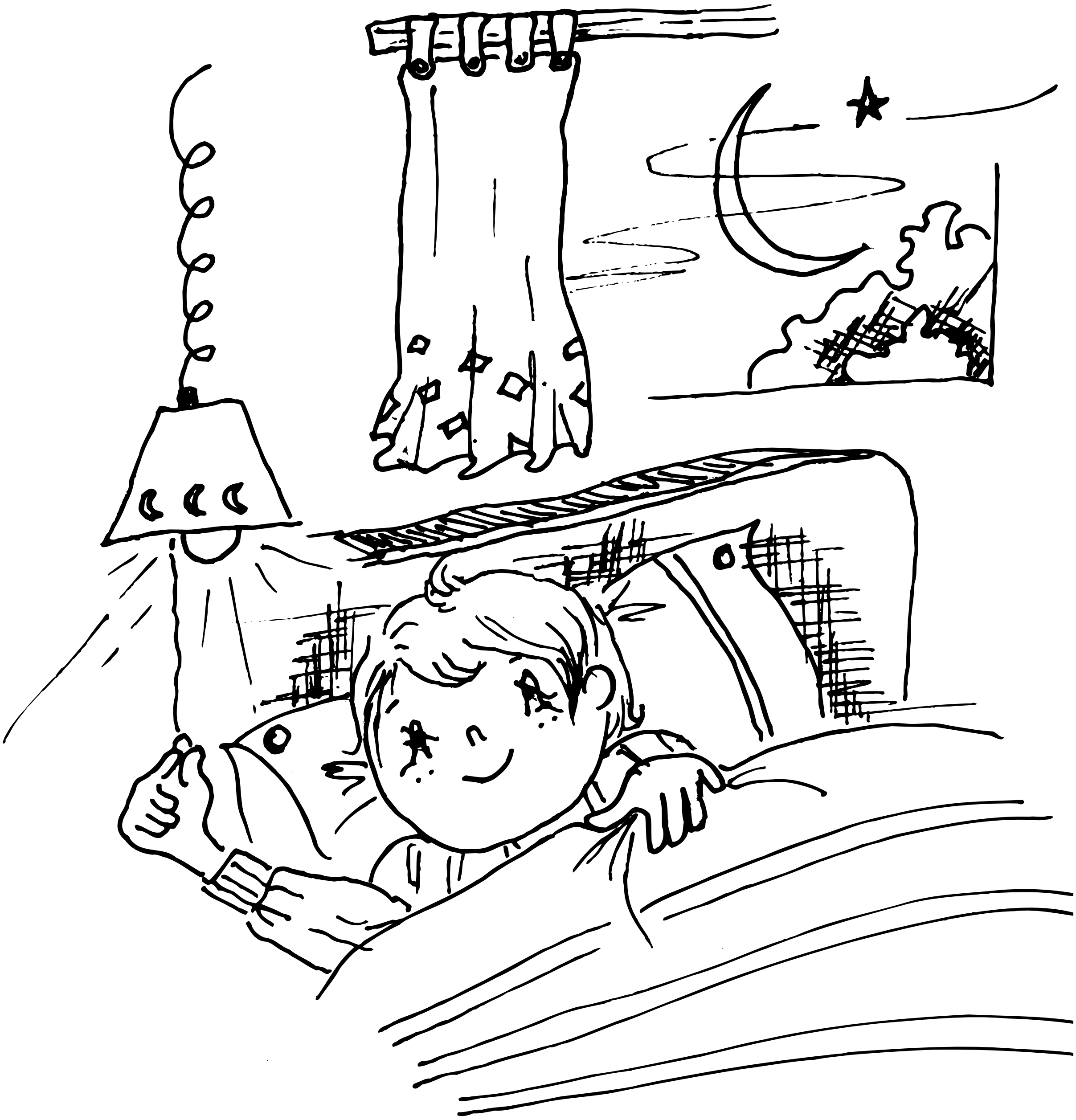
or is the food eating me?

Sleeping And Waking

Just as you try to be mindful throughout the day, it's good to close the day with mindfulness, too. Thus as you prepare to retire at night you can be mindful. Be aware of whatever preparations you may make before going to bed. As you are preparing or arranging the bed, be aware too. And finally as you lay your body down, be especially mindful of that act. It is a significant act as it signifies your intention to sleep — your last act of closure for the day. So note the intention to lie down and then lie down mindfully, aware of the body lowering itself onto the bed and the head as it touches the pillow. Remember that the Buddha's attendant, Ananda, was said to have attained enlightenment as he was lying down for the night. It seemed he became an arahant just or even before his head touched the pillow!

Of course, we know we can't become arahants just like that, we are not Ananda, but then again, who knows, perhaps one of these days we, too, might attain some special insight as we mindfully lie down. It is said that when the fruit is ripe it will drop, so we'll never know when enlightenment might strike, when we are spiritually mature for some such insight or wisdom to arise. All we can do is to prepare the ground, to be mindful, and though we may not realize it, day by day, the plant of knowledge is growing from the soil of mindfulness.

So after having lain down mindfully, you can continue to be mindful of your state of mind and body. You can know the sensations in the contact between your body and mattress and your head and pillow. You can know your breath as you breathe in and out or you can know the rising and falling of the abdomen



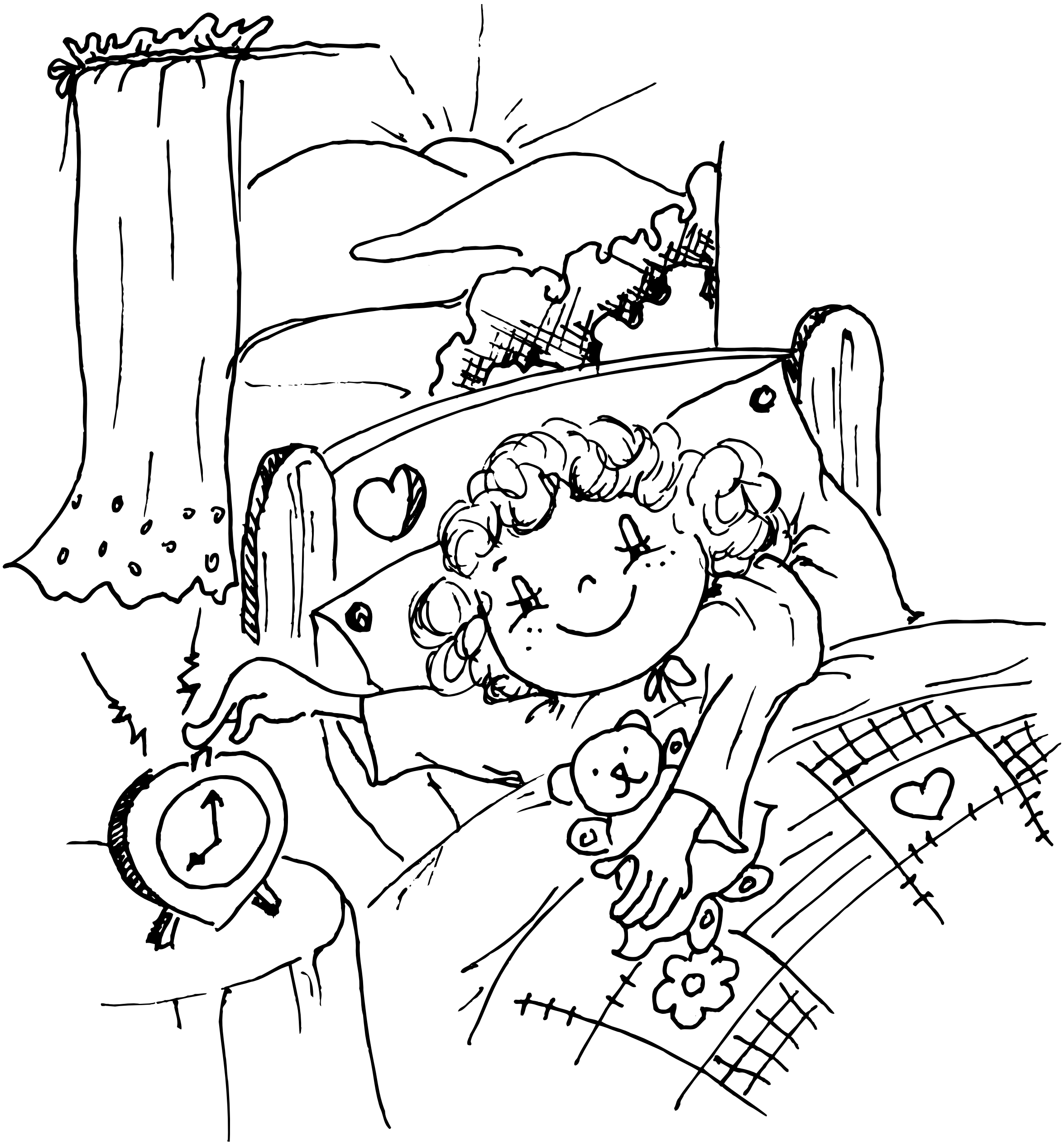
Touching, tugging,
switching off the light.
How have I lived this day?
Have I loved? Have I cared?
Have I been kind & generous & mindful?
And have I learnt to live without attachment,
being able to let go, too?
Ah, tomorrow will be another day.
May all beings be happy…

which occur as you inhale and exhale. You can be aware of your mind and the thoughts that may arise. You can stop your thinking and planning and allow yourself to drift into sleep. If you toss about in bed or intend to turn to the side or from one side to another, you can do all this mindfully, too, noting your intention to turn and then turn. Also you can radiate lovingkindness to specific persons and to all beings until you fall asleep. So you have the option of just being mindful of the body and mind, or radiating lovingkindness, or both, before falling asleep.

This is a really wholesome way of going about your sleep. If a person is suffering from insomnia, radiating lovingkindness and practising mindfulness during bedtime might help by way of cutting down on mental agitation and discursive thinking and planning which may be the cause of the inability to sleep. Also, even if the insomnia persists one can be consoled that at least the mind is kept in a wholesome and meditative state rather than one of agitation and anxiety.

♥♥♥

Again just as we close the day with mindfulness we must begin it with mindfulness, too. So have you thought about how you wake up in the morning? Isn't it important to wake up on the right side of the bed? Here waking up on the right side means waking up in a good state of mind. Be aware that you have awakened. If possible try to be aware that you have awakened even before you open your eyes. Then open your eyes mindfully, noting even the intention to open the eyes before you open them. This may be rather difficult, that is, to be mind-



Pressing alarm (switching off).
Opening eyes.
Oh, what a beautiful morning!
Another day of opportunities
for cultivating a bigness of heart
of love and kindness,
for learning the lessons of our lives,
of appreciation and understanding
& letting go….

ful even before you open the eyes, catching the awakening moment — but it is rather challenging and interesting — is it not? — to see how alert and mindful you can be at the moment of awakening.

But if you can't catch that awakening moment and you found you have already opened your eyes, it is okay, you can still be mindful. Notice your state of mind. Are you fresh, alert, wide awake, or are you still sleepy and wanting to sleep some more? If you feel the latter way, you can notice the desire to linger in bed, how you turn from one side to another, not wanting to get up. But you know you have to get up, so try to summon that intention to get up and try to get up mindfully, with as much awareness as you can muster. Then go about what you have to do mindfully, walking to the bathroom door, opening the door, and being mindful of all the activities that follow — urinating, uncapping the tooth paste, squeezing the paste onto the toothbrush, brushing your teeth, rinsing your mouth, soaping and washing your face, wiping it with the towel, and so on.

Then be mindful as you walk back to your bed, fold your blanket, make your bed, change, and so on. If possible it is good to do an hour of sitting meditation after you have washed your face. But if you can't find an hour, how about 45 minutes or half an hour? It is good to start off the day with meditation which can help you to be more composed for the rest of the day. And needless to say, it is good also to do some meditation after you get back from work; it helps to clean or purify the mind after a day of activity.

* * *

Talking

In the discourse on mindfulness, the Buddha says we can be mindful while talking or keeping silent. What does he mean? Of course, talking involves thinking and verbalizing, that is, moving of our mouth and tongue to produce sound and words. So we can be mindful of our lips moving and the thoughts that arise in our mind as we speak. But I think what is most important here is to be mindful of whether our speech is wholesome or not, whether it falls within Right Speech of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Right speech is speaking the truth, not lying, misrepresenting, misleading, or deceiving. A good motivation when speaking is important. This means one should speak with goodwill, not ill will. One should be honest and sincere in what one says.

Right speech is not slandering or speaking maliciously. As far as possible one should try to promote concord, understanding and friendship between two parties rather than cause misunderstanding, discord and animosity. Right speech is not speaking harshly, in anger, or with intent to hurt. Remember that though sticks and stones may break our bones, words can do far worse: they can break our hearts. So one should take care to speak gently, kindly, with the best of intentions, considering the sensitivity and vulnerability of others.

Right speech is not gossiping and taking delight in speaking ill about others. It is not speaking frivolously and nonsensically about things which are of no benefit to the hearer. Right Speech is speaking about things which are important and beneficial. It is about giving wise counsel and reminding each other of the need to practise the Dhamma in order to gain liberation from samsaric suffering.

Right speech is not speaking with envy and jealousy but with magnanimity, being able to rejoice over and be happy for the wholesome deeds and accomplishments of others.

Right speech does not mean we cannot criticise or admonish or point out the faults of others. But it does mean that we must be careful to do so with objectivity, fairness, sincerity and good intentions. We must be careful to speak without anger, hatred, ill will, malice, and prejudice. We must be careful not to become overly critical, judgmental or fault-finding. We must be able too, to see the good in others, to be balanced in our judgment or assessment of others.

Having said all this, we do agree it is not easy to practise right speech all the time. Many a time we may speak unskilfully or frivolously and unnecessarily. Many a time we may lose our cool and speak in anger or irritation, snapping or hitting out at another. Many a time we may be speaking just to fill the void of silence. And many a time, too, it may have been better for us to keep noble silence and maintain our mindfulness and equanimity in that silence.

Practising right speech is a great challenge; it is something we have to constantly practise and improve upon.

More Tips: Note the Intention

It is good to make it a habit to note the intention before doing anything. Even in simple actions such as getting up and sitting down, we can note the intention. How many times a day do we get up from a chair or sit down on one? So there are many opportunities to note that intention. All you have to do is to pause and note the intention before getting up and before sitting down. Noting the intention will help you to follow up with more precise awareness of the getting up and sitting down. You will be able to follow and feel more closely the sensations and movements involved in the simple act of raising or lowering the body.

The same goes for many other simple actions such as opening or closing a door, switching on or off a light or fan, turning on or off a tap, bending down to pick up something, slipping on a shoe, getting up in the morning, lying down at night and a thousand and one other things — you can practise noting the intention and the action that follows. No doubt it would not be possible to notice every intention that arises but we can practise noting some of those intentions from time to time. As in all practices, at first it will be difficult to catch the intention but as you keep practising, keep making an effort to note the intention, it will in time become easier.

Why, you may ask, should you note the intention? Well, first it is a good and interesting exercise. It trains your mind to become more alert. Thus you'll be surprised that there may come a time when you can't help but notice your intention when you are about to do something. You'll be pleased that you could now be aware of your mind to that extent — that even the intention can now be noticed and observed. This ability will also help you to be more mindful and aware of whatever you do.

Also such noting will give you a slight pause or interval between intention and deed. And in that gap or pause, you can decide whether to go ahead to do something or not. For sometimes you might be about to do something unwholesome and if you can catch the intention before doing it, you have an opportunity to apply the brakes and abort the action. For example you might notice your intention to raise your hand to smack a mosquito which has landed on some part of your body. Then because of wanting to keep the first precept of not-killing or wanting to practise compassion and spare life, you might decide instead to just brush the insect away without hurting it. Or, to give another example, you could notice, while angry, your intention to snap at somebody, to say something harsh or hurtful. Then you might just check that urge and keep noble silence. Yes, we can exercise restraint in many ways through awareness of our intention.

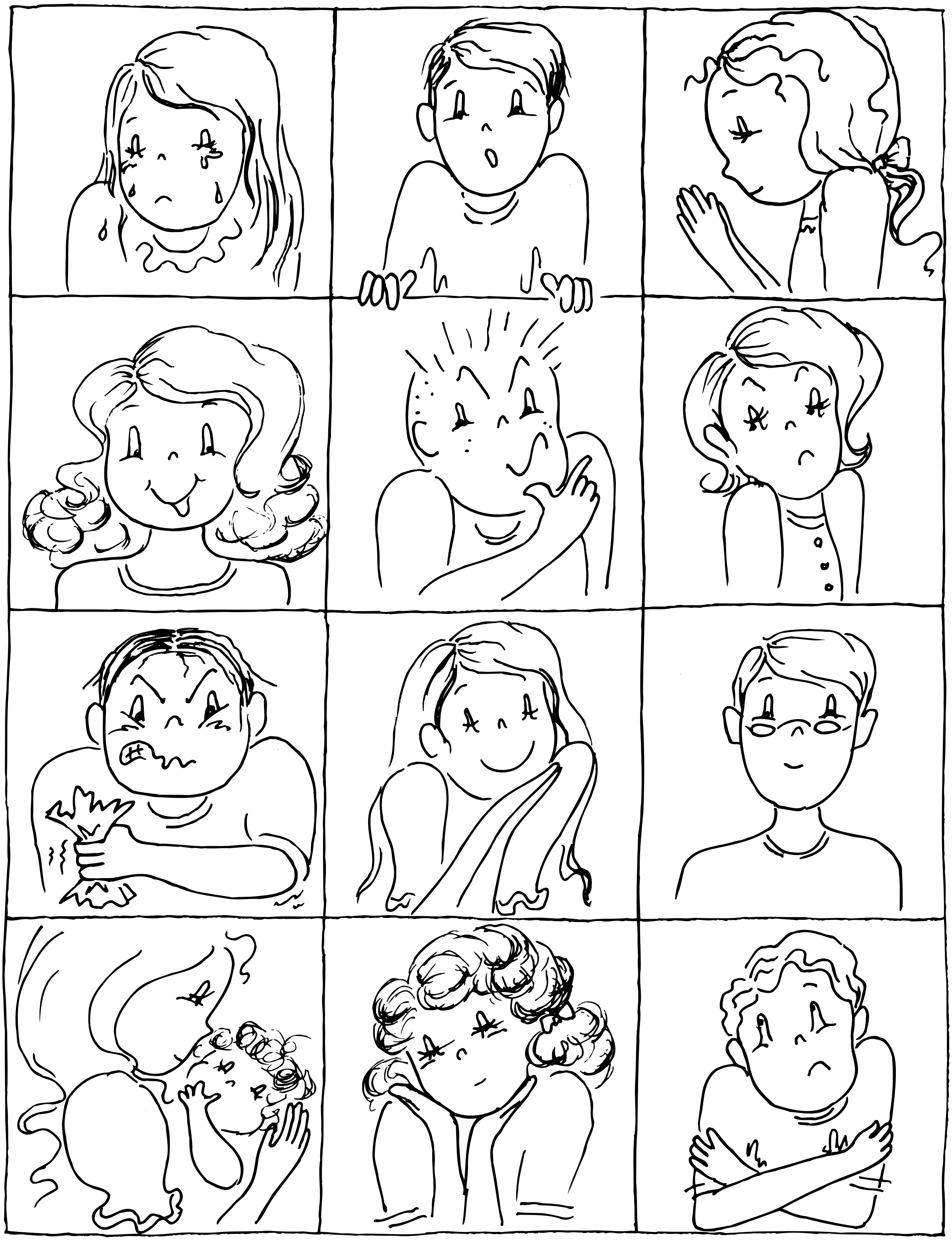
On the other hand, if you notice your intention is a good one, such as to spare life, to practise compassion or generosity, to help somebody, then you can go ahead and do it. You can encourage your mind to act upon it, to not hesitate but to perform the good deed with enthusiasm and joy. Thus, the Buddha has said that mindfulness is helpful everywhere: it can restrain the mind from doing something unwholesome or spur it to do something good.

♥♥♥

Changing Moods

In the course of the day, do be aware of the changes in the landscape of your mind. Notice the various thoughts that arise and pass away; moods, emotions, and various states of mind — sad, happy, depressed, cheerful, bright, clear, light, alert, sleepy, dull, lethargic, heavy, lazy, diligent, disinterested, bored, listless, enthusiastic, excited, calm, peaceful, tranquil, disturbed, worried, anxious, angry, raging, hating, loving, kind, forgiving, envious, jealous, rejoicing, happy for others, doubts, lust, desire, craving, greed, miserliness, selfishness, meanness, generosity, equanimity, wisdom, understanding, moral shame and moral fear or the lack of it, mindfulness, awareness, etc.

Awareness of our mind states can help us to understand ourselves better and can bring about a gradual change and improvement in us. The first step is to see ourselves as we are — warts and all — and the rest, i.e., changes for the better, will follow eventually. For example, we will find unwholesome states such as anger, envy, and jealousy, painful and we will want to give them up. This can be done through awareness of those unwholesome states when they arise, effort to check and dispel them, and wise reflection and reminders to oneself that can help one to overcome those states or prevent them from arising. Thus, when we notice the faults of greed and lust, the pain of craving and addiction, those unwholesome mental factors may gradually lose their hold over us. We may crave less and become more content. Furthermore, as we take up meditation, and find joy through caring and service, we will enjoy more and more wholesome states of mind.



Watch the changing landscape of your mind — the moods that come and go in the course of your day.

Do notice, too, that ultimately we are just mental states. Where is the solid "I" here? Are we not just made up of mind moments, one thought after another, a series or a stream of thoughts? Is not the thought the thinker? One moment we think we would do something and another moment we find we have changed our mind. One moment we are happy and another moment sad, one moment cheerful and the next depressed. So where is the permanent "I"? When we can see how we are thus conditioned by our thoughts, that 'we' are our thoughts, we won't take this self as something permanent or unchanging. We know that just thoughts, moods and states of mind, come and go, that they arise and dissolve according to various conditions and influencing factors, such as our propensity sometimes towards greed, anger, and delusion and sometimes towards non-greed, non-anger and non-delusion. Our task, therefore, is to become more mindful of thoughts and mental states as they arise, as they stay, and as they pass away. Through such mindfulness we can gradually steer and condition our mind towards cultivating more wholesome than unwholesome states. We can become more joyful and happy than sad or depressed. Through such wholesome conditioning we are actually training and taming the mind.

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A Special Note on Anger and Sorrow

What we have highlighted in the beginning part of this booklet is body awareness. But there is also lot to observe with regard to the mind which, when uncontrolled, is a great cause of suffering. As the saying goes, the mind can be our best friend or worst enemy. When tamed it can be a friend and bring about happiness, but when wild and unrestrained, it can wreak great havoc and suffering. It is not within the scope of this booklet to go into an in-depth analysis of the nature of mind and how it gives rise to suffering via craving, attachment and delusion. For that one has to read other good books on the subject.

But here we can briefly examine two particular mind states which cause suffering to most people and they are anger and sorrow. As a monk I have often been asked as to how we can control anger. Many people want to control anger, they don't want to get angry, they know that their inability to control anger is a cause of much suffering both to themselves and others, but they just can't help it, just can't help losing their cool. So they want to know how to check their anger.

Of course, mindfulness helps. Whenever you are angry you should quickly be mindful of your anger. Try and see whether you can be aware of your anger at the incipient stage, that is, at the stage when it is just about to begin. Observe that tightening in the chest and various other bodily sensations that may arise together with the anger. Observe also that angry state of mind — how does it feel like — the feeling of rage, of wanting to crush or snuff out somebody? As you turn your attention away from the person you are angry with to the emotion of anger itself together with its attendant bodily tension, you'll find that your anger instead of increasing will decrease. It will dissipate and subside. On the other hand, if you were to continue to focus your attention on the person who had angered you, your anger is liable to increase than decrease.

To give a simile, when your house is on fire, is your immediate priority to put out the fire, or to go after the person who set it ablaze? So turning your intention inward is like putting out the fire in your house. Going after the provocateur is like chasing after the arsonist. By the time you catch him, your house would have burnt down! In this case, your mind would have been burnt up or consumed by your anger. In which case you have actually become the victim!

Thus the thing to do is to try to get a hold of yourself, to calm down. Besides observing your anger and the body sensations, you can also be mindful of your breathing. Mindfulness of the breath can produce a calming effect on both the mind and body. So you can come back to your breath and be aware as you breath in and out. Taking a few deep breaths and exhaling mindfully can also help. Or you can use auto suggestions, words like "Breathing in I calm myself, breathing out I relax," or "Breathing in I calm myself, breathing out I smile."

When you are angry, try not to say or do anything because whatever you say or do in that frame of mind is liable to be harsh and counter-productive. Better then to hold your tongue and not say or do anything until your anger has passed. Otherwise you might say or do something which will hurt and which you might regret later. Another option, if you still find it difficult to contain your anger, is to walk away. Take a walk somewhere, especially in a garden or a park if there is one nearby. Looking at plants, flowers, trees, hills and blue skies can be soothing. Nature has a healing effect on the mind and body.

Besides mindfulness, you can also use wise reflection to calm down the mind. Think about the many disadvantages of anger and the advantages of self-control and your anger will subside. For example, consider: "What good does getting angry do? Am I not hurting both myself and others? Is anger the only response? Is anger the response of a mature or wise person? Is there no other skilful way of responding to this situation?

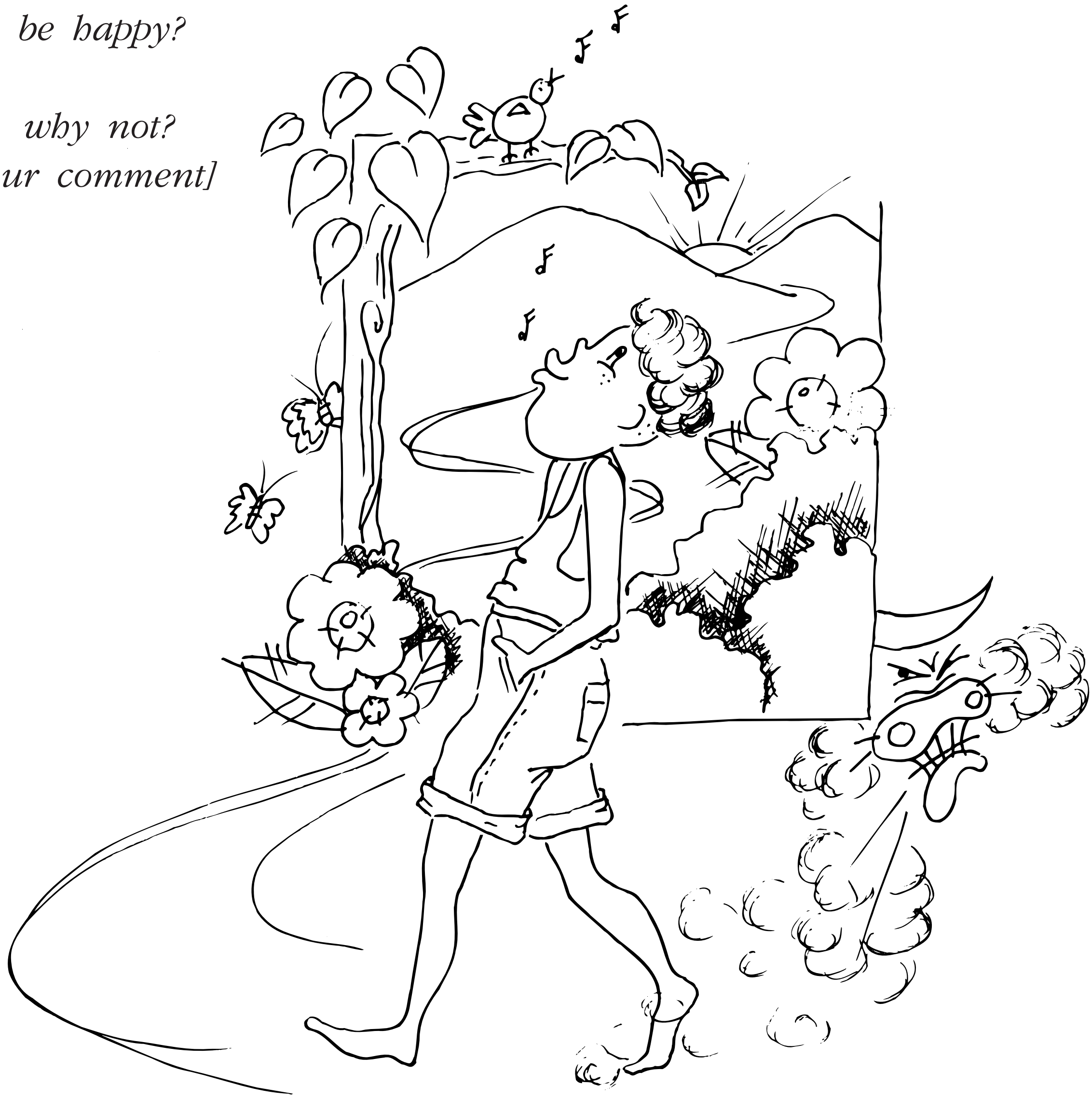
"Why should I allow another person to upset my mind? By getting angry, won't I be allowing him to penetrate my mind which by right should be my own domain over which I should exercise the fullest control? Won't I, by becoming angry, be allowing him to (if one may, for effect, put it in a crude way) enter and shit in my mind? And won't I be the one who is a fool to allow this to happen? And further, if it has been his intention to provoke me, won't I, by becoming angry, fall into his trap?"

And if you are thinking along the line of overcoming and defeating him, you could check yourself and consider: "Won't it be better to tame and conquer my own mind than to conquer that of another? Did not the Buddha say that self-conquest is, by far, the highest conquest — that though one may conquer a thousand men a thousand times in a battlefield, yet he who conquers himself is a greater conqueror?" And was it not Santideva who said: "How many evil men could I kill? Their number is as boundless as the sky. But if the thought of anger is killed, all enemies are killed."

You can consider also how your anger might be perceived

Now, now, why should I get angry
with that good-for-nothing fellow?
Look, it's so beautiful out here.
Step….step... [he's mindful of
the stepping in between thoughts.]
Why don't I just sing a song [he started
humming a tune… perhaps in his head]
and be happy?

[Yes, why not?
— our comment]



Yes, an option when you are struggling to contain your anger, is to walk away. Take a walk somewhere, especially in a garden or a park if there is one nearby. Looking at plants, flowers, trees, hills and blue skies can be soothing. Nature has a healing effect on the mind and body.

by the other person. “Will she not lose respect for me or think less of me for losing my temper? And even if I were to apologise to her later, what if she cannot forgive me or, if she does, what if she cannot forget? Will our relationship be irreparably damaged because of these few moments of anger, because of my not being able to control myself at this moment, because of my losing my temper?”

Or you could try another tact: Think about the good qualities of the other person, how he may have helped you before. Or even if he may not have helped you much, you could think about his kindness to others — perhaps he has helped a lot of other people, too. When you consider his goodness, you might think less badly of him and you might then cool down. To give an example, if a person is annoyed with his parents, if he were to think of all his parents’ love and kindness for him, all the sacrifices they have made for him, he would surely want to overcome his anger and cultivate love for his folks.

There are other wise ways of reflecting. Consider what you look like when you are angry. If you were to whip out a mirror and look at your face when you are angry, you will be horrified to see how wild, mad and terrible you look! Consider that according to the law of kamma, anger is a cause for ugliness in future rebirths. And why should this be surprising when you consider that even in this very life, anger has the immediate result of distorting one’s features?

Thinking about death, too, can be very effective. Consider: Life is too short for us to get upset in this way. If we know that we are going to die tomorrow or in a few hours’ or few minutes’ time, would we still want to get mad in this way? Is it not better to live at peace with oneself and others?

Consider why anger arises. Is it not because of our identification with a self or an ego? Is it not pride that makes us think we are somebody, so how come this person does not respect us/how dare he insult us? Realizing that conceit, pride and ego are the roots of our anger, we might learn to let go of our attachment to the ego and learn not to get so upset when we are offended. Really, sometimes it is good to be 'insensitive' in certain ways, such as not being able to be angry, no matter what.

Consider the virtue of patience. Patience means not getting angry. Whenever we are provoked or tested, we can tell ourselves this is the time for us to practise patience. The person taunting us is our tester. Will we pass the test or not? If we lose our temper, then we have failed. If we don't, we have passed the test of patience. Make non-anger your priority, such that you rather not succeed in something and keep your cool, than accomplished something but vented your anger in the process.

Sorrow

Nobody's life is free of sorrow. As human beings we do get sorrowful and depressed at times — for all and various kinds of reasons. How can mindfulness help?

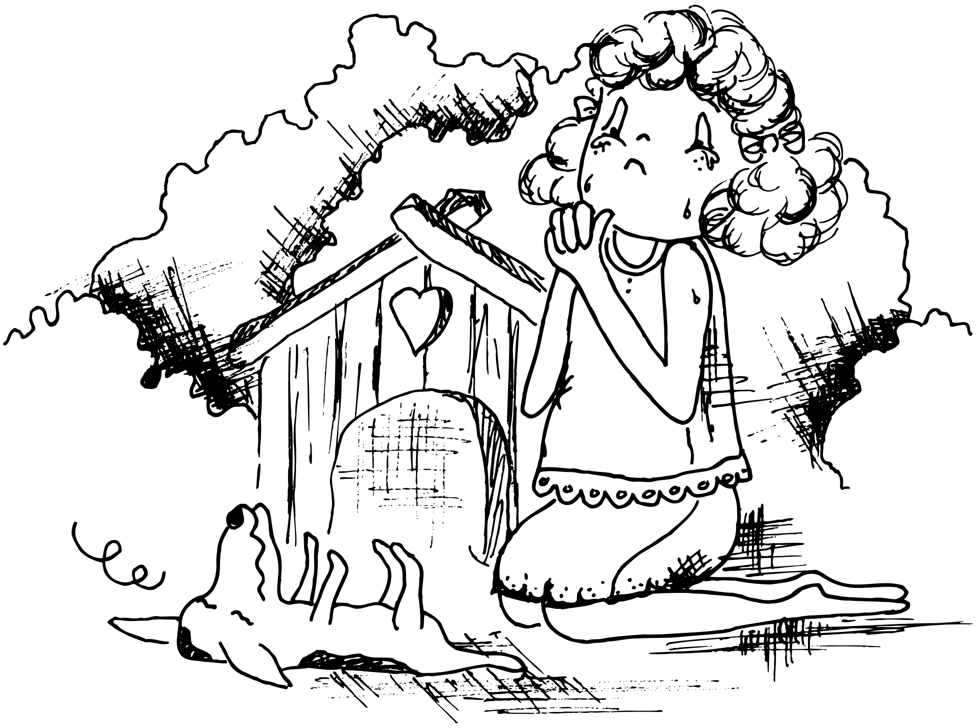
First, we can be aware of this sorrow, this pain or feeling of unhappiness in our heart. How is it like? How do you feel it as a sensation in the body? Does it feel like a sharp or searing pain in the heart? Or is it more like what they call a heartache, that is, a sort of aching pain varying from dull to acute in the heart? Or would you describe it as a feeling of heaviness, a feeling of disease, a tension, a knot, a disquietness? Or does it feel like something gnawing or biting away in the heart? Or whatever? You'd find that ten people would have ten different ways of describing their pain, each using different metaphors and imagery.

And as for that state of mind itself, how would you describe it? How is that mental feeling like? Which word might best characterize it — sorrow, sadness, grief, pain, woe, lamentation, mourning, regret, remorse, melancholy, depression, malaise, disease, a feeling of emptiness, hollowness, meaninglessness, gloom, desolation, despair, agony, vexation, anxiety, anguish?

Observing the pain helps because as you do so you'd find that it is not something impregnable. It is not something as solid, permanent or lasting as you might have thought it to be. Both the physical sensations and the mental state can be found to be impermanent, as phenomena that are arising and passing away. This ability to observe in an objective or detached manner can help alleviate the pain. It is a like the case of observing the anger where instead of focusing on the person you were angry with, you turn your attention inwards onto the anger itself. And as you do so, you find the anger lessening rather than increasing. Similarly, when you turn your attention from the person or the situation that is causing you the pain, to the pain itself, the pain too may lessen. Initially, however, you may feel that the pain is becoming stronger, but as you observe you'd find that it does subside. It is like a wave which has its ebb and flow, rise and fall.

On the other hand, if you do not acknowledge or observe the pain, you might get more and more sucked into that vortex of sorrow. It might just overwhelm or smother you. It may totally pin or weigh you down.

Grief, grief…
sorrow, sorrow…
Oh Lord Buddha, I know this pain in my
heart is there because of attachment.
You have taught me well about the
danger and pain of attachment.
But how can I not be attached to
dear dear Spot? He was so loyal,
so faithful, so affectionate,
— he was my best friend!
and now he's gone & my heart is broken.



[It's okay to grieve. We understand. All of us (unless we are anagamis or arahants who have uprooted aversion) do grieve. But please note the grief. Please feel, observe and understand it — understand how it has arisen and learn to reconcile with the pain that must come from attachment. And ask yourself the question: how can I ever love without attachment, without pain? When you can answer this question, you would have come to the end of all pain and suffering, you would have solved the riddle and puzzle of life.]

Acknowledging the pain can also help you to see things in a proper perspective. As you observe it, you can also reflect on how the pain has arisen. For example, you can remind yourself that pain normally arises because of craving and attachment. So you can ask yourself, how or in what way have you craved or become attached so as to now feel this pain? There are many forms of attachment — attachment to persons, to possessions, to the status quo, that is, to things remaining as they are, not wanting any change, but how can that be possible when it is in the nature of things to change and transform into something or other, which could be better or worse? There is attachment to name, to one's status or position in life; to one's ego or image of self; to one's job or career; to sensual pleasures and pleasant sensations, to a thousand and one other things. Attachment is insidious and furtive: it develops without our realizing and before we know it we have become deeply attached.

Attachment leads to aversion. When we lose something we have become attached to, there is anger, pain and grief. Because we can't get something, we get upset and depressed. Expectation, too, leads to disappointment. So we can consider how the pain had arisen because of our grasping or clinging. In understanding the causes, we can be liberated; for once we understand, we can begin to let go since we know it is the clinging that is the cause of suffering. Also, adopting various wise and skillful attitudes can help to greatly reduce our suffering, for most of the time the pain is ultimately of our own making and it is better not to blame others or external conditions so much, for finally it is how we respond that counts.

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The Practice of Lovingkindness

It's good to incorporate the practice of mindfulness and lovingkindness in our everyday life. This means we try to be mindful in everything that we do or for as much of the time as possible, try to watch this mind and watch this body, follow the body movements, notice the sensations that arise and pass away in the body, notice the intentions and thoughts that arise and the state of the mind. Then every now and then we can radiate lovingkindness to all beings by simply thinking and wishing in our mind: "May all beings be happy. May they be free from harm and danger. May they be free from mental suffering. May they be free from physical suffering. May they take care of themselves happily." It doesn't take long to mentally recite these lines; it takes a minute or less to repeat a few rounds of these lines.

Developing lovingkindness is simply the radiating of such good wishes. As we fill our mind with such wholesome thoughts and suffuse the world with love, we'll find a gradual change coming over us. We'll find that we'll be happier, get angry less often, and have more goodwill towards others. Eventually the goodwill that we have for others will be translated into words and deeds. How can it be otherwise if we are genuinely cultivating lovingkindness, if we are sincerely wishing well for others?

As we transform ourselves in this way, we'll find that people also change in their attitude towards us. They become more friendly and well-disposed towards us. Even animals may show their friendliness and heavenly beings, too, it is said, will protect those who are kind and virtuous. As our lovingkindness develops we'll find that we don't want to hate anybody, that we don't subscribe to hatred any more. No matter what, we'll believe that love is the answer, not hate, not anger. Consequently we'll be able to forgive easily, we won't keep or nurse grudges, and we won't seek revenge.

May all beings be happy.
May they be free from harm & clanger.
May they be free from mental suffering.
May they be free from physical suffering.
May they take care of themselves happily.

Other benefits of lovingkindness practice are that we'll be able to sleep more easily, dream pleasant dreams, can concentrate more easily, and have a radiant complexion. Furthermore, when death comes, he (or she) will have a peaceful death and a good rebirth on account of his having lived with much love and goodwill.

Radiating lovingkindness is a practice strongly recommended by the Buddha. During his time he urged his monks, nuns, and lay disciples to radiate lovingkindness daily and frequently. In Pali, the language in which the early teachings of the Buddha were recorded, the word for lovingkindness is *mettā*. This word mettā is now often used by Buddhists. We would say practise mettā, radiate mettā, develop mettā, show mettā. And we also often sign off our letters with the words, 'With mettā'. In addition to lovingkindness, other pseudonyms for mettā are love, goodwill, friendliness. But here we should differentiate mettā from the normal worldly concept of love which may be mixed up with lust, desire, craving, longing, possessiveness, and attachment. Metta in the Buddhist context is none of these things. It is purely wholesome, a pure goodwill, a sincere wish for the well-being and happiness of others; it is also unconditional in that it does not expect anything back from the recipient of one's mettā. Perhaps the word, mettā, should be included in the English dictionary as a kind of love, goodwill, friendliness which is strictly dissociated from sensual desire, lust, craving, longing, possessiveness, and attachment.

Now there are many ways in which you can radiate mettā. As we have said you can do it anywhere and at any time even when you are doing things, working, eating, shopping, walking on the road, standing in a queue, lying down at night before falling asleep, etc. All you have to do is to radiate thoughts of goodwill to the people around you — anybody and everybody. For example, you may be seeing a doctor — as he is treating you, you can radiate mettā to him and the nurse or nurses that may be assisting him.

All you have to do is to wish in your mind, 'May he be happy, May she be happy," and so on. You can repeat the five lines' formula we have already mentioned above over and over again in your mind or you can use any words you like, your own wishes, like "May he be peaceful, joyful, healthy, wise."

You can radiate good wishes to your parents, grandparents, spouse, children, brothers and sisters, relatives, loved ones, friends, neighbours, teachers, bosses, colleagues, subordinates, workers, etc. You can radiate to persons who are dear and close to you. You can radiate to neutral persons, i.e. persons you hardly know or feel for, such as an acquaintance, a casual friend, or someone you know only by sight. You can radiate to so-called enemies, i.e. if you were to consider anybody as your enemy. Of course, it is better not to have any enemies or to consider anybody as one. In which case you can radiate to persons who may be hostile towards you, who dislike you, or whom you feel hostile or averse towards, whom you dislike. You can radiate to persons you are having a difficult time with, having conflicts with. This could even be your own dear and close ones! Or you can radiate to persons who have had conflicts with you in the past. You can wish them well, that they may be happy and so on. You can even throw in some forgiveness exercise, by thinking, "I forgive you (i.e. for whatever he or she had done to you), and may you forgive me too (i.e. if you had intentionally or unintentionally hurt the person.)"

And of course, you can wish for yourself, too, "May I be happy. May I be free from harm and danger, may I be free from mental suffering, may I be free from physical suffering, may I take care of myself happily." Or you can put it in whatever way or words you like. It seems that some times we tend to think badly of ourselves, we tend to berate ourselves, have a low self-esteem, and can even be harsh and unkind to ourselves. And some people even hate themselves! So it may be a good idea to radiate mettā to yourself too, to learn how to love yourself, how to accept yourself as you are, warts and all. As somebody once said "I may not be perfect but parts of me are excellent!" And this is very true — we may not be perfect but we have some excellent or good qualities, too. And then again, who is perfect — all of us have our flaws, don't we? So we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves, shouldn't judge ourselves too harshly.

Accepting ourselves as we are, appreciating our own goodness or good qualities and accepting our faults and limitations, does not mean that we will be complacent and not try to improve ourselves. No doubt we will keep trying to improve ourselves, keep trying to change in areas where we feel we ought to change, keep trying to purify our mind and weaken and uproot the mental defilements of greed, hatred, anger, delusion, etc. But as we are trying we should be patient and love ourselves, too. Just as other people deserve love or goodwill, so do we. Thus, we should forgive ourselves our lapses, remembering the saying, "The glory is not in never failing, but in rising again every time you fall."

Beside human beings, there are animals, ghosts, asuras (Buddhists believe these are some kind of hot-tempered, violent or aggressive spirit beings), and heavenly beings of which there are two kinds, devas (those dwelling in the sensual plane and enjoying sensual pleasures) and brahmas (those dwelling in the non-sensual plane enjoying a kind of mental bliss that is devoid of sensuality). So we can also radiate mettā to all these beings wishing that they may be well and happy. You can even radiate mettā to your departed ones* thinking and wishing that may he (or she) wherever he has taken rebirth be happy, be free from harm and danger, and so on.

Now in radiating mettā there is the formal radiating and the informal one. By formal we mean sitting down, say in the formal meditation posture with folded legs on the floor, and radiating mettā intensively for say 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 minutes or even up to an hour. In this case we'll be mentally reciting those mettā lines again and again and generating an intense or fervent wish in our heart for the welfare and happiness of all beings or specifically named beings. In this kind of meditation we can gain deep concentration and absorption. We can become very calm, peaceful and tranquil. And a lot of joy and happiness can arise as we develop the skill in radiating and gaining concentration.

The informal radiating is what we have already mentioned above, just making sporadic wishes now and then as you go about your work, as you walk about, as you answer the phone, etc. In this case, the concentration is not so intense but the benefit is still great because you are constantly programming or conditioning your mind to be full of goodwill. It will also bring about the many benefits we have already mentioned above, such as a reduction in or lack of anger and ill will, a smiling or cheerful disposition, and an ability to make friends easily.

So you can do these two kinds of mettā meditation —

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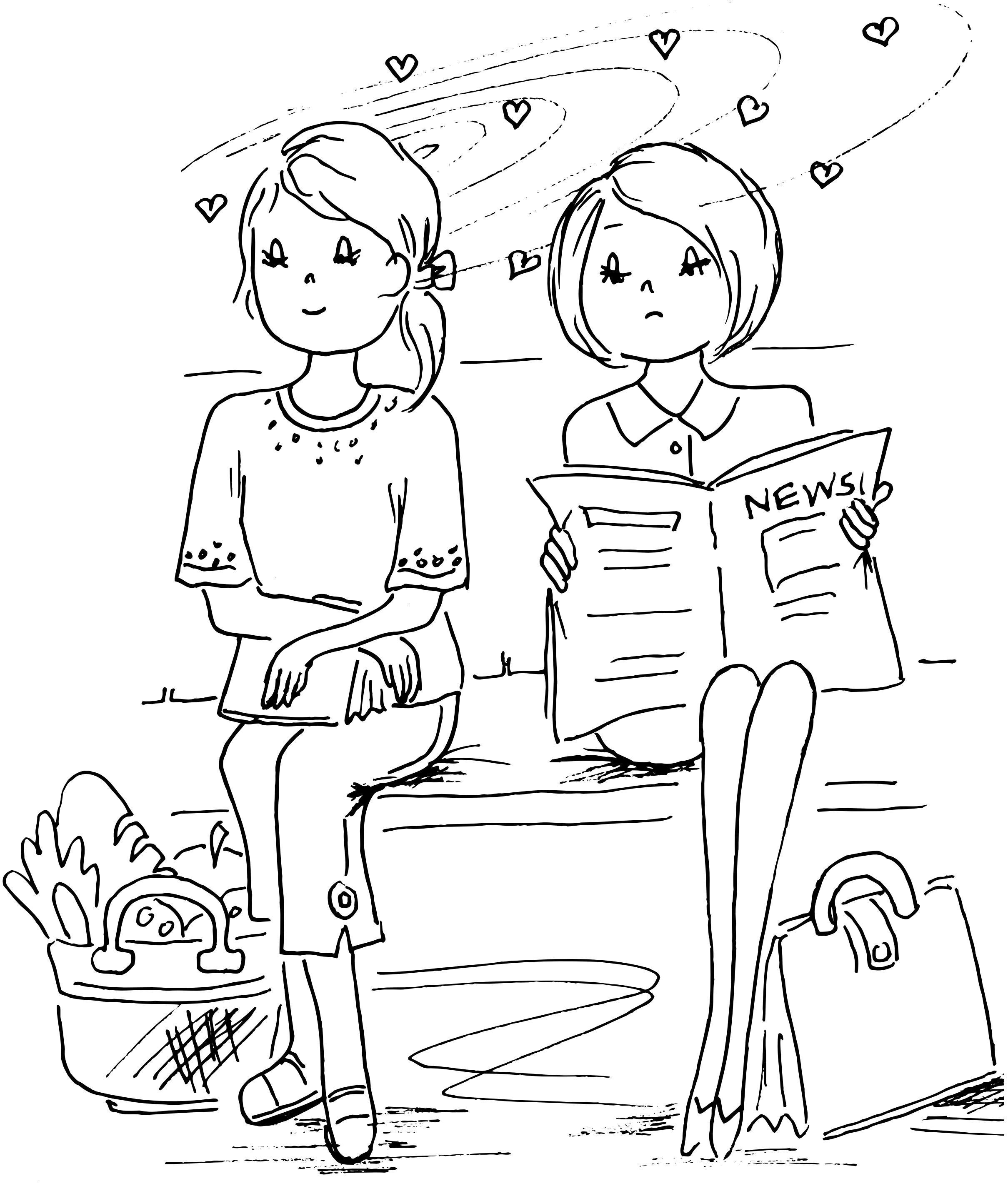
*In the Visuddhimagga, a manual on meditation, it is stated that one does not radiate mettā to a dead person. But in this case we are thinking along the line of wherever that person has been reborn, so we are radiating to that living reborn person and not to a dead being any more.

informal and formal. For the formal one you could start off your day with mettā radiation as the Buddha himself did. You can sit down in the meditation posture or on a chair if you can't manage the formal meditation posture, and radiate lovingkindness for as long as you like. Or you can do it in the evening or night before going to bed. Or in the middle of the day or whenever you feel like it, you could close your eyes and radiate lovingkindness, even while seated in a chair in your office or while travelling in a bus, train, or plane.

Besides lovingkindness please remember the mindfulness practice. Being mindful now and then, as much as possible, of our daily activities, body movements and sensations, thoughts and mental states. As regards mindfulness, there is also the formal mindfulness or insight meditation which is done seated with legs folded on the mat or cushion on the floor. After having seated comfortably one then observes (feels or becomes aware of) the breath going in and out of the nostrils, or one observes the abdominal rise and fall that occur in unison with the breath, or one observes the sitting and tangible sensations at the back, buttocks, legs, hands, etc. It is not within the scope of this booklet to explain the formal insight meditation procedures and its aim which is to gain calm and tranquility and to see the impermanence, suffering (unsatisfactoriness) and egoless nature of this mind and body. For that you could read books such as *Insight Meditation* by Joseph Goldstein, the *Experience of Insigh*t, also by Goldstein; *Essentials of Insight Meditation* by Ven. Sujiva, *Practical Insight Meditation* by Mahasi Sayadaw, *In This Very Life*: The Liberation Teachings of the Buddha by Sayadaw U Pandita, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* by Nyanaponika Thera, and *The Posture of Meditation* (which explains the sitting posture) by Will Johnson.

Ah, may this good lady who is sitting next to me be happy…
May she be free all harm and danger.
……….. be free from mental suffering.
……….. be free from physical suffering.
………. take care of herself happily.

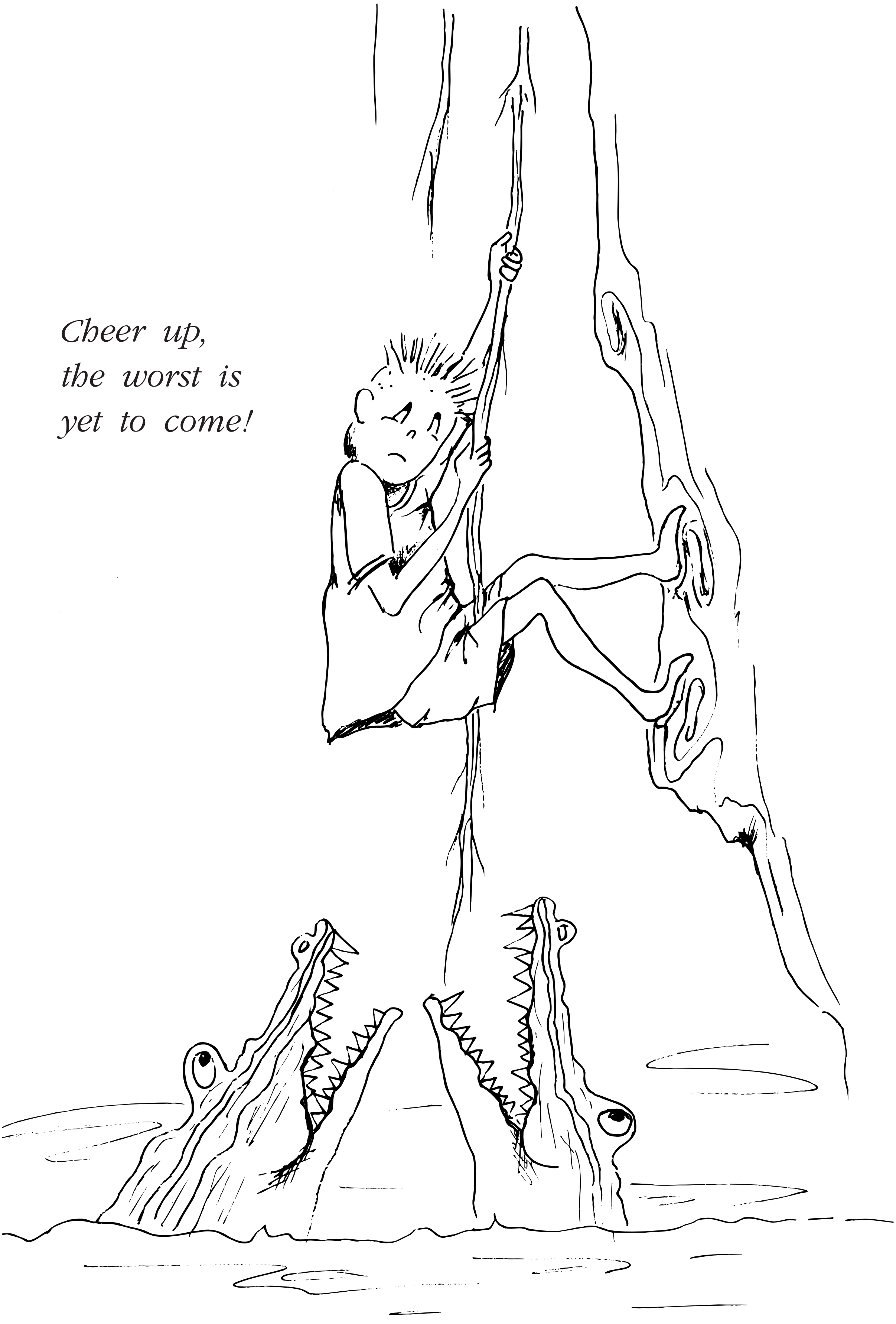


Wise Reflection

In Pali there is a very important term called *yoniso manasikāra* which has been translated as wise reflection and wise attention. The Buddha often emphasized the need for the application of wise reflection and attention in life. Wise reflection means to reflect or think in a wise way. And we need a lot of that, don't we? In life so many things go wrong (as they do go right, too) and we must know how to reflect in such a way as to be able to keep our mind afloat and buoyant. By afloat here I mean not to let the mind sink into depression, or if it does become depressed, then not to let it stay that way for too long. This means that we should try to keep our mind either cheerful, happy, or calm, peaceful and equanimous. And for that, we need (besides mindfulness) to know how to reflect in such a way as to lift our mind out of the quagmire. There are many ways of reflection such as counting our blessings, look on the bright or positive side (that is, see the full half as opposed to the empty half), see how things could have gone worse (cheer up, for the worst is yet to come, ha! ha!, or cheer up, for soon we will all be dead anyway, so why worry so much?), compare ourselves with those that are worse off so as to appreciate that we are still quite fortunate, inject a sense or dose of humour (he who laughs at himself never ceases to be amused), understand the nature of life — the facts of impermanence, suffering and not-self (egolessness or the uncontrollability of events) and so on.

Now wise reflection also involves wise attention which means paying attention in a wise or proper manner. This means seeing or observing how the suffering has arisen. For example, we can notice how our unskilful attachment and grasping has

Cheer up,
the worst is
yet to come!



contributed to our suffering. Through such understanding and realization we can begin the work of letting go, of relaxing our grip on our hold of things and people, of living lightly and happily. Life offers us a lot of lessons: there are lots of opportunities for us to learn — the question is do we learn or do we keep making the same mistakes? Expectations, for example, lead to disappointments. Can we, therefore, expect less and be less disappointed? Can we be content with little and find happiness in the good old fashioned values of caring and loving, of giving and serving?

Life has a lot to teach us but we have to pay careful attention in order to team. Look inside yourself and look around — there are lessons to be gleaned everywhere. I like the way inspirational writer Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen puts it. She said: "We are all here for a single purpose: to grow in wisdom and to learn to love better. We can do this through losing as well as through winning, by having and by not having, by succeeding or by failing. All we need to do is to show up open-hearted for class. So fulfilling life's purpose may depend more on how we play than on what we are dealt with."

How true! Is it not how we play that counts, how we respond towards a certain situation, towards life, and all the things that happen to us in life? Sometimes *kamma-vipāka* (that is, the results of actions we have done in this or previous lives) may deal us certain blows or sufferings in life. But it is how we respond that can make a difference. For example, if we must or have to suffer we can choose to do so cheerfully or calmly, or we can choose to be depressed or angry. What we wish to emphasize here is we do have a choice as to how we respond, and how we make that choice is up to us. What's important is to realize that what counts is the learning and growing, that is, whether we are growing wiser and kinder. If we are then we are doing fine, we are actually being successful, because ultimately that's the success that counts — the loving better and becoming wiser and kinder.

Paying attention is also a form of mindfulness. It means observing the mind and body states that are arising and passing away in us all the time. Through such observation we will come to understand not only the specific characteristics of those states but also their impermanent nature — how they are just fleeting mind moments and material qualities which are constantly arising and passing away. We are not something fixed and unchanging but something flowing like a river. We are something changing and we can change for the better or worse depending on our choice. Of course, having chosen to change for the better, we also need to make effort to bring about that change.

Seeing impermanence will lead us to understand the suffering or unsatisfactory and not-self nature of phenomena. All this understanding will lead to or culminate in a letting go of craving, anger and delusion. We will end up living more lightly, wisely and happily. For the Buddhist, however, living happily is not the ultimate goal of this practice of mindfulness: there is something further to strive for, which is the attainment of Nibbāna, the end of all rebirth and suffering.

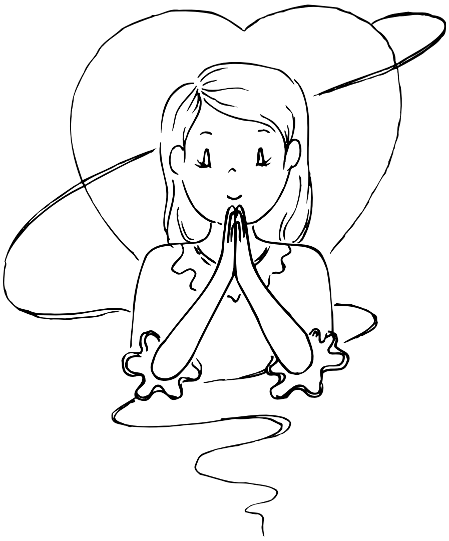
♥♥♥

What we have shared here are only some aspects of the practice. There's a lot more that can be written about mindfulness and the teachings of the Buddha. For us to live a more happy, peaceful, meaningful and fulfilling life, we need to cultivate the right values and attitudes. The Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path is a complete and holistic path that includes the factors of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. We need to study all aspects of these path factors if we are to live meaningfully and exit from *saṃsāra*, the cycle of birth and death.

We hope, however, that the little we have written here has whetted your appetite and that you will be inspired to read more books on the subject of mindfulness and meditation and various other aspects of the Buddha’s teachings.

May you find the peace and happiness that you seek in life. May all beings, too, be happy. May all be liberated from suffering.

In conclusion, may we offer this prayer for the well-being and happiness of all sentient beings in the universe:



May penetrating light dispel the darkness of ignorance.
May all kamma be resolved and the mind-flower
of wisdom bloom in Nibbāna’s eternal spring.

May all those who are afflicted be affliction-free.
May they be serene through all their ills.

Even if bodily afflictions do not subside,
may we all be healed in heart and mind.

May all beings live in peace and harmony.
May they have health & wealth & comforts
& friends that are true.
May they have skills, talents, & knowledge
& sweet success in all that they do.

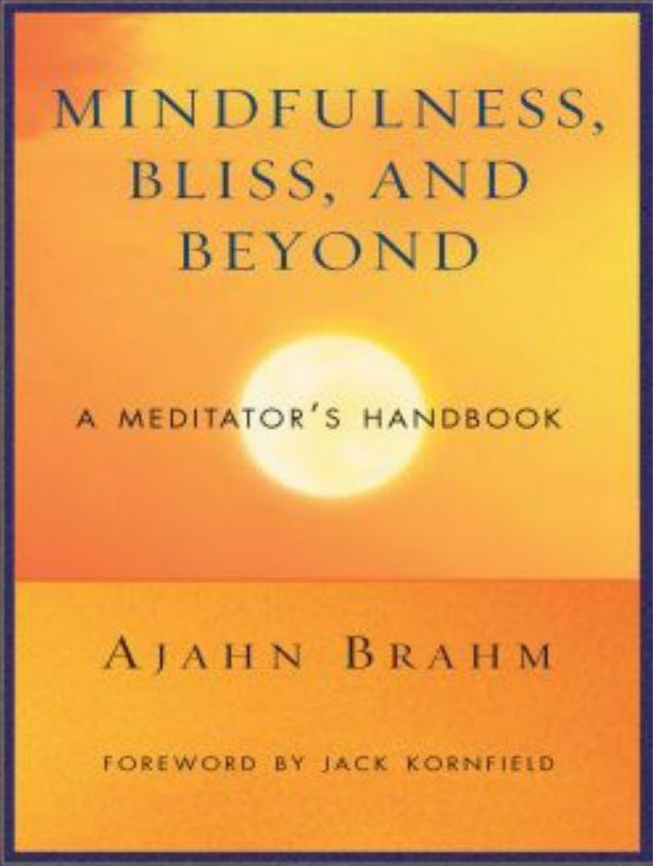
May they have joy & happiness in abundance.

May all beautiful, great and noble virtues of — generosity, love, kindness, compassion, patience, fortitude, tolerance, forgiveness, honesty, courage, strength, energy, resolution, determination, resilience, perseverance, consideration, humility, gratitude, contentment, composure, serenity, wisdom, understanding and equanimity — be theirs.

May they attain full wisdom and enlightenment. May they be liberated from all suffering.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to take the opportunity here to express thanks and gratitude to all those who have touched my life. It is quite impossible, of course, for me to name everybody here. There are especially many more persons from my earlier years who I have not named. May all named & unnamed benefactors and friends accept my humble appreciation and gratitude. May they always be blessed with much peace, joy and happiness.



MINDFULNESS, BLISS, AND BEYOND

A MEDITATOR'S HANDBOOK

AJAHN BRAHM

FOREWORD BY JACK KORNFIELD

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More Praise for *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond*

"Most Buddhist writers are not often lighthearted or zesty, but the British-born Ajahn Brahm is a delightful exception. Even though meditators are taught not to expect anything, since that represents an attachment, meditation should bring you joy and bliss, according to Brahm. The bliss states of meditation *(jhānas)* are little-taught, so this book is an addition with value in a crowded niche. Trained in the Thai forest tradition by the Buddhist master Ajahn Chah, Brahm is a clear communicator of the ineffable. He is able to write about a variety of mental states and visualizations with precision and discrimination, drawing on his own experience. He is step-by-step systematic, which helps demystify what happens in meditation. Also useful is the specificity with which he describes the kinds of problems meditators encounter and what to do to resolve them. Meditation is difficult to teach on the page, but Brahm, who began his life as an academic at Cambridge, fulfills his calling as a teacher. He projects both energetic conviction and calm equanimity. […] An excellent manual."

—*Publishers Weekly*

Praise for Ajahn Brahm and *Who Ordered This Truckload of Dung?*

"One of the best spiritual books of 2005."

—*Spirituality and Health*

"Ajahn Brahm spins a good yarn—108 of them here—drawing on teaching stories he heard as a student of Ajahn Chah, one of the great masters of the Thai forest tradition, and on personal anecdotes. Between the classical Buddhist stories and the homespun advice, you'll get a good sense of who this teacher is, and why so many people are drawn to hear him speak about Theravada Buddhism."

—*Shambhala Sun*

"More than statistics and theories, we really trust anecdotes and narratives. Our brains and beings are wired to learn deeply and easily via stories, and this splendid collection of 108 Buddhist-based tales proves the point with lasting, gentle, pervasive teachings. […] Especially resonant if slowly savored, this is a wonderful collection that can be enjoyed by a broad audience."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Masterly storytelling and Dharma teaching, beautifully and effectively combined. The tales are at times hilarious, at times poignant; often both."

—*Larry Rosenberg, author of Breath by Breath*

"This is a book that is destined to become dog-eared and cherished and read aloud to one's friends and family. It will fall apart from your attention, I promise you!"

—*Mandala*

"Ajahn Brahm is the Seinfeld of Buddhism."

—*Sumi Loundon, editor of*
Blue Jean Buddha: Voices of Young Buddhists

Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond

A Meditator's Handbook

Ajahn Brahm

foreword by Jack Kornfield

Wisdom Publications • Boston

Foreword

YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS a truly helpful and sophisticated manual of meditation written by a monk with deep and wide-ranging experience. Ajahn Brahm is one of a new generation of Westerners who have studied, practiced, and mastered an important range of Buddhist teachings and now offer them to sincere practitioners across the modern world.

In *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond* you will find a thorough set of teachings for developing and deepening meditation, aimed particularly at attaining absorption, or *jhāna samādhi,* and opening to the insights that can follow from it. Ajahn Brahm offers a careful and subtle understanding of how to transform initial difficulties and how to incline the mind toward rapture, happiness, light, and the profound steadiness of jhāna. Then he turns this concentrated attention to illuminate the emptiness of self that brings liberating understanding. These are beautiful teachings.

While I acknowledge with pleasure the fruit of Ajahn Brahm's rich experience as a guide for meditators, Ajahn Brahm presents this way of developing jhāna and insight as the real true way the Buddha taught and therefore the best way. It is an excellent way. But the Buddha also taught many other equally good ways to meditate and employed many skillful means to help students awaken. The teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, Ajahn Buddhadasa, and Sunlun Sayadaw are among a wide spectrum of masters who offer different and equally liberating perspectives. Together they comprise a rich mandala of living Dharma, of which Ajahn Brahm reveals one important facet.

So, those of you interested in the practice of jhāna and the depths of the Buddhist path: read this book carefully. And try its practices. Much will be gained from its rich and wise words and even more from the experiences it points to. And as the Buddha and Ajahn Brahm both advise, test them out, use them, and learn from them, but do not cling to them. Let them lead you to the liberation beyond all clinging, the sure heart's release. May these teachings bring understanding, benefit, and blessings to all.

With metta,

Jack Kornfield
Spirit Rock Center
Woodacre, California 2006

Abbreviations

Buddhist Texts in Pāli		Numbered by:
AN	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*	division & sutta no.
Dhp	*Dhammapada*	verse no.
Dhp-a	*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*	volume & page no. in Pali Text Society (PTS) edition
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*	sutta, section, & verse no. in *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*
Ja	*Jātaka*	volume & page no. in PTS edition
Miln	*Milindapañha*	chapter & dilemma no. in PTS edition
MN	*Majjhima Nikāya*	sutta & section no. in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*
SN	*Saṃyutta Nikāya*	chapter & sutta no.
Sn	*Sutta Nipāta*	verse no.
Th-a	*Paramatthadīpanī (Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā)*	volume & page no. in PTS edition
Thag	*Theragāthā*	verse no.
Thig	*Therīgāthā*	verse no.
Ud	*Udāna*	chapter & sutta no.
Vin	*Vinaya*	volume, chapter, section, & subsection no. in PTS edition
Vsm	*Visuddhimagga*	chapter & section no. in *The Path of Purification*

Acknowledgments

FIRST, I WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE Cūlaka Bhikkhu (Dr. Jacob Meddin) who turned his tiny monk's hut into something resembling a third-world sweatshop, working long hours over many months, even though in poor health, to produce the first versions of these instructions for the Buddhist Society of Western Australia's in-house Dhamma Journal. My thanks also go to Ron Storey, who typed out the manuscript so many times that he must now know these teachings by heart, and to Nissarano Bhikkhu, who organized the index. Next, I convey long overdue appreciation to my first meditation teacher, Nai Boon-man of the Samatha Society in U.K., who revealed the beauty and importance of jhāna to me while I was till a long-haired student at Cambridge University in 1970. But most of all, I express my infinite gratitude to the teacher under whose instructions I happily lived for nine years in Northeast Thailand, Venerable Ajahn Chah, who not only explained the path to liberation so clearly, but who also lived the path so totally, to the very end.

Last but not least, my thanks go to all at Wisdom Publications, including David, Rod, and my copyeditor John LeRoy, for all their hard work bringing this volume to completion. May their good karma give them good health so that they will be able to work even harder on my next book.

Introduction:

The Big Picture

MEDITATION IS *the* way of letting go. In meditation you let go of the complex world outside in order to reach a powerful peace within. In all types of mysticism and in many spiritual traditions, meditation is the path to a pure and empowered mind. The experience of this pure mind, released from the world, is incredibly blissful. It is a bliss better than sex.

In practicing meditation there will be some hard work, especially at the beginning, but if you are persistent, meditation will lead you to some very beautiful and meaningful states. It is a law of nature that without effort one does not make progress. Whether you are a layperson or a monk or nun, without effort you get nowhere.

Effort alone is not sufficient. Effort needs to be skillful. This means directing your energy to just the right places and sustaining it until the task is complete. Skillful effort neither hinders nor disturbs; instead it produces the beautiful peace of deep meditation.

The Goal of Meditation

To know where your effort should be directed in meditation, you must have a clear understanding of the goal. The goal of this meditation is beautiful silence, stillness, and clarity of mind. If you can understand that goal, then the place to apply your effort and the means to achieve the goal become much clearer. The effort is directed to letting go, to developing a mind that inclines to abandoning. One of the many simple but profound statements of the Buddha is that “a meditator who makes letting go the main object easily achieves *samādhi,”* that is, attentive stillness, the goal of meditation (SN 48,9).[1] Such a meditator gains these states of inner bliss almost automatically. The Buddha was saying that the major cause for attaining deep meditation and reaching these powerful states is the ability to abandon, to let go, to renounce.

Letting Go of Our Burdens

During meditation, we should not develop a mind that accumulates and holds on to things. Instead we should develop a mind that is willing to let go, to give up all burdens. In our ordinary lives we have to carry the burden of many duties, like so many heavy suitcases, but within the period of meditation such baggage is unnecessary. In meditation, unload as much baggage as you can. Think of duties and achievements as heavy weights pressing upon you. Abandon them freely without looking back.

This attitude of mind that inclines to giving up will lead you into deep meditation. Even during the beginning stages of your meditation, see if you can generate the energy of renunciation—the willingness to give things away. As you give things away in your mind, you will feel much lighter and more free. In meditation, abandoning occurs in stages, step by step.

Meditators are like birds that soar through the sky and rise to the peaks. Birds never carry suitcases! Skillful meditators soar free from all their burdens and rise to the beautiful peaks of their minds. It is on such summits of perception that meditators will understand, from their own direct experience, the meaning of what we call "mind." At the same time they will also understand the nature of what we call "self," "God," "the world,""the universe," the whole lot. It's there that they become enlightened—not in the realm of thought, but on the soaring summits of silence within their mind.

The Plan of the Book

Part 1 of this book, “The Happiness of Meditation,” is for those who want to meditate in order to relieve some of the heaviness of life but, because of obstacles or disinclination, will not pursue meditation into the bliss states and enlightenment. Here I demonstrate that, even for the beginner, meditation when practiced correctly generates considerable happiness. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the first steps of meditation in a clear and systematic way. They are a revised version of a little booklet of mine titled *The Basic Method of Meditation*.[2] Chapters 3 and 4 identify the problems that can occur in meditation and show how these obstacles, once recognized, are easily overcome. In chapters 5 and 6 I explain mindfulness in a unique way and then extend the meditator’s repertoire by presenting three more methods of meditation, all supportive of the path to inner peace. Then in chapters 7 and 8 I bring into play some of the classic teachings of the Buddha, namely, the discourses on *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing) and *satipaṭṭhāna* (focuses of mindfulness), in order to validate the instructions so far and enrich them with the insightful descriptions of the Buddha himself.

The second part, “To Bliss and Beyond,” is a guided tour through the world of timeless Buddhist rapture. It describes how meditation literally implodes into the supreme bliss of the jhānas and how such states of letting go lift the veil of our five senses to reveal the awesome world of the mind, the magic inner garden where enlightenment is reached. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 cast open the world of the pure mind with a detailed account of the experience of jhāna, giving precise step-by-step instructions on how to enter these amazing states. Next, chapters 12 and 13 continue the ascent of the peaks of spiritual experience by narrating how insight based on jhāna unlocks the gates to the orchard of wisdom. Then in chapters 14 and 15 I describe how the task of life is brought to a grand finale, giving precise and authentic details on what enlightenment is and how it is achieved.

The conclusion,“Letting Go to the End,” is the book’s “reentry vehicle” that returns the reader from the otherworldly realms of jhāna and nibbāna back to ordinary life—although not without a final leap toward the unconditioned as a sort of memento of our journey.

How to Use this Book

This book has three purposes. First, it serves as a course in Buddhist meditation. Meditators who read the book carefully and carry out its instructions conscientiously will receive a progressive and complete course in meditation, one ultimately based on the traditions and sometimes even the actual words of the Buddha himself. These profound, time-honored teachings are presented here in a manner that is compatible with Western thought.

Second, this book is a troubleshooting guide. It is structured to help surmount specific problems in practice. If, for example, ill will is an obstruction, the reader can turn to chapter 3,"The Hindrances to Meditation I," where one finds the advice to practice loving-kindness meditation *(mettā)* to overcome ill will. Other problem-solving advice is less common—even rare and hard to come by. Chapter 5, "The Quality of Mindfulness," is a good example. The details of how to set up a "gatekeeper" to both monitor and protect your meditation are invaluable instructions.

The third function of this book is to enable readers to explore aspects of Buddhist meditation that they know little about. It provides information that may be hard to find. Chapters 9-12 on the deep states of meditation bliss *(jhāna)* are a good example. Although the jhānas are fundamental to the Buddha's meditation instructions, they are generally not well understood these days.

It was with some trepidation that I sent this book to the publisher. When I began to practice meditation in London during the late 1960s, a visiting Japanese Zen monk told me, "According to the law of karma, anyone who writes a book on Buddhism will spend his or her next seven lifetimes as a donkey!" This had me worried. Whether it is true or not, it is my conviction that anyone who follows the instructions in this book will escape all rebirth, not only rebirth among those with long ears.

In the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* (MN 36) the Buddha relates, "I considered: …'Could that [jhāna] be the path to enlightenment?' Then, following on that memory, came the realization, 'That is the path to enlightenment.'"[3]

Part 1

The Happiness of Meditation

1

The Basic Method of Meditation I

IN THIS CHAPTER we will cover the four initial stages of meditation. You may wish to go through the initial stages quickly, but be very careful if you do. If you pass through the initial steps too quickly, you may find that the preparatory work has not been completed. It's like trying to build a house on a makeshift foundation—the structure goes up very quickly, but it may come down too soon! You would be wise to spend a lot of time making the groundwork and foundations solid. Then, when you proceed to the higher stories—the bliss states of meditation—they will be stable.

Stage One:

Present-Moment Awareness

When I teach meditation, I like to begin at the simple stage of giving up the baggage of past and future. You may think that this is an easy thing to do, but it is not. Abandoning the past means not thinking about your work, your family, your commitments, your responsibilities, your good or bad times in childhood, and so on. You abandon all past experiences by showing no interest in them at all. During meditation you become someone who has no history. You do not think about where you live, where you were born, who your parents were, or what your upbringing was like. All of that history you renounce. In this way, if you are meditating with others, everyone becomes equal—just a meditator. It becomes unimportant whether you are an old hand at meditation or just a beginner.

If we abandon all that history, we are equal and free. We free ourselves of some of the concerns, perceptions, and thoughts that limit us, that stop us from developing the peace born of letting go. Every part of our history is finally released, even the memory of what happened just a moment ago. Whatever has happened no longer interests us, and we let it go. It no longer reverberates in our mind.

I describe this as developing a mind like a padded cell. When any experience, perception, or thought hits the wall of this cell, it does not bounce back. It just sinks into the padding and stops. The past does not echo in our consciousness. Some people think that if they contemplate the past, they can somehow learn from it and solve their problems. But when we gaze at the past we invariably look through a distorted lens. Whatever we think it was like, in truth it was not quite like that at all! This is why people argue about what happened even a few moments ago.

It is well known to police who investigate traffic accidents that two different eyewitnesses, both completely honest, may give conflicting accounts of the same accident. When we see just how unreliable our memory is, we will not overvalue the past. We can bury it, just as we bury a person who has died. We bury the coffin or cremate the corpse, and it is done with.

Do not linger on the past. Do not keep carrying around coffins full of dead moments. If you do, you weigh yourself down with heavy burdens that do not really belong to you. When you let go of the past, you will be free in the present moment. As for the future—the anticipations, fears, plans, and expectations—let that go too. The Buddha once said,"Whatever you think it will be, it will always be something different" (MN 113,21). This future is known by the wise as uncertain, unknown, and unpredictable. It is often useless to anticipate the future, and in meditation it is always a great waste of time.

The Mind Is Wonderful and Strange

When you work with your mind, you find that it is so strange. The mind can do wonderful and unexpected things. Meditators who are having a difficult time achieving a peaceful state of mind sometimes start thinking, “Here we go again, another hour of frustration.” But often something strange happens: although they are anticipating failure, they reach a very peaceful meditative state.

Recently I heard about a man on his first ten-day retreat. After the first day, he was in such pain that he asked to go home. The teacher said,“Stay one more day and the pain will disappear, I promise.” So he stayed another day, but the pain only got worse. So again he wanted to go home. The teacher repeated his instruction,“Just one more day and the pain will go.” He stayed for a third day, but the pain was even worse. Every evening for each of the first nine days he would go to the teacher and ask to go home. And the teacher would say, “Just one more day and the pain will disappear.” To his complete surprise, on the first sit in the morning of the final day, the pain disappeared and it did not come back. He could sit for long periods with no pain at all. He was amazed at how wonderful this mind is and how it can produce such unexpected results. So you cannot know the future. It can be so strange, so weird, so completely beyond what you would expect. Experiences such as this man’s can give you the wisdom and courage to abandon all thoughts and expectations about the future.

When you think during your meditation, “How many more minutes are there to go? How much longer do I have to endure this?” that is just wandering off into the future. The pain could disappear in a twinkling. You simply cannot anticipate when that is going to happen.

During a retreat you may think that none of your meditations were any good. But in the next meditation session you might sit down and everything becomes so peaceful and easy.“Wow!” you think.“Now I can meditate!” But then the next meditation is as awful as the first ones. What’s going on here?

My first meditation teacher told me something that at the time sounded quite strange. He said that *there is no such thing as a bad meditation* . He was right. All those meditations that you call bad or frustrating are where you do the hard work for your “wages.” It’s like a person who on Monday works all day but gets no money at the end of the day.“What am I doing this for?” he thinks. He works all day Tuesday and still gets nothing. Another bad day. All day Wednesday and Thursday he works, and still nothing to show for it. Four bad days in a row. Then along comes Friday. He does exactly the same work as before, and at the end of the day the boss gives him his wages. Wow! Why can’t every day be a payday?

Why can't every meditation be a payday? Do you understand the simile? During the difficult meditations you build up your credit, the reason for your success. In the hard meditations you build up your strength, which creates the momentum for peace. Then when there is enough credit, the mind goes into a good meditation, and it is a payday. But you must remember that it was in the so-called bad meditations that most of the work was done.

The Past and Future Are Burdens

In one retreat that I gave, during an interview a woman told me that she had been angry with me all day, but for two different reasons. In her early meditations she was having a difficult time and was angry with me for not ringing the bell to end the meditation early enough. In the later meditations she got into beautiful, peaceful states and was angry with me for ringing the bell too soon. The sessions were all the same length, exactly one hour.

When you anticipate the future by thinking, “How many more minutes until the bell rings?” you torture yourself. So be very careful not to pick up the heavy burden of “How many more minutes to go?” or “What should I do next?” If that is what you are thinking, you are not paying attention to what is happening now. You are asking for trouble. You are not doing the meditation.

In this stage of meditation keep your attention right in the present moment, to the point where you don’t even know what day it is or what time it is. Morning? afternoon?—don’t know! All you know is what moment it is *right now.* In this way, you arrive at this beautiful “monastery time,” where you are just meditating in the moment.You’re not aware of how many minutes have gone or how many remain. You cannot even remember what day it is.

Once as a young monk in Thailand, I had actually forgotten what year it was! It is marvelous to live in the realm that is timeless, a realm so much more free than the time-driven world we usually live in. In the timeless realm, you experience *this* moment—just as all wise beings have been experiencing *this* moment for thousands of years. You have arrived at the reality of now.

The reality of now is magnificent and awesome. When you have abandoned all past and all future, it is as if you have come alive. You are here. You are mindful. This is the first stage of meditation, just this mindfulness sustained only in the present. Reaching this stage, you have done a great deal.You have let go of the first burden that stops deep meditation. So it is important to put forth a lot of effort to make this first stage strong, firm, and well established.

Stage Two:

Silent Present-Moment Awareness

In the introduction I outlined the goal of this meditation: beautiful silence, stillness, and clarity of mind pregnant with the most profound insights. You have let go of the first burden that stops deep meditation. Now you should proceed to the even more beautiful and truthful silence of the mind.

Silence Means No Commentary

In discussing stage two it is helpful to clarify the difference between experiencing the silent awareness of the present moment and thinking about it. The simile of watching a tennis match on TV helps. You may notice that two matches are occurring simultaneously: the match that you see on the screen and the match that you hear being described by the commentator. The commentary is often biased. If an Australian is playing an American, for example, an Australian sportscaster is likely to provide a very different commentary from an American one. In this simile, watching the TV screen with no commentary stands for silent awareness in meditation, and paying attention to the commentary stands for thinking about it. You should realize that you are much closer to truth when you observe without commentary, when you experience just the silent awareness of the present moment.

Sometimes we assume it is through the inner commentary that we know the world. Actually, that inner speech does not know the world at all. It is the inner speech that spins the delusions that cause suffering. Inner speech causes us to be angry with our enemies and to form dangerous attachments to our loved ones. Inner speech causes all of life's problems. It constructs fear and guilt, anxiety and depression. It builds these illusions as deftly as the skillful actor manipulates the audience to create terror or tears. So if you seek truth, you should value silent awareness and, when meditating, consider it more important than any thought.

It is the high value that one gives to one's own thoughts that is the main obstacle to silent awareness. Wisely removing the importance that one gives to thinking, and realizing the greater accuracy of silent awareness, opens the door to inner silence.

An effective way to overcome the inner commentary is to develop a refined present-moment awareness. You watch every moment so closely that you simply don't have the time to comment about what has just happened. A thought is often an opinion on what has just happened: "That was good." "That was gross." "What was that?" All of these comments are about the previous experience. When you are noting or making a comment about an experience that has just passed, you are not paying attention to the experience that has just arrived. You are dealing with old visitors and neglecting the new arrivals.

To develop this metaphor, imagine your mind to be a host at a party, meeting the guests as they come in the door. If one guest comes in and you start talking with this person about this or that, then you are not doing your duty of paying attention to every guest who enters. Since a guest comes in the door every moment, you must greet each one and then immediately greet the next.You cannot afford to engage even in the shortest conversation with any guest, since this would mean missing the one coming in next. In meditation, experiences come one by one through the doors of our senses into the mind. If you greet one experience with mindfulness and then start a conversation with it, you will miss the next experience following right behind.

When you are perfectly in the moment with every experience, with every guest that comes into your mind, then you simply do not have the space for inner speech. You cannot chatter to yourself because you are completely taken up with mindfully greeting everything just as it arrives. This is refining present-moment awareness to the level that it becomes silent awareness of the present in every moment.

In developing inner silence you are giving up another great burden. It is as if you have been carrying a heavy rucksack on your back for thirty or fifty years continuously, and during that time you have wearily trudged for many, many miles. Now you have had the courage and found the wisdom to take that rucksack off and put it on the ground for a while. You feel so immensely relieved, so light, and so free, now that you are unburdened.

Another useful technique for developing inner silence is recognizing the space between thoughts, or between periods of inner chatter. Attend closely with sharp mindfulness when one thought ends and before another thought begins—*there!* That is silent awareness! It may be only momentary at first, but as you recognize that fleeting silence you become accustomed to it. And as you become accustomed to it, the silence lasts longer. You begin to enjoy the silence, once you have found it at last, and that is why it grows. But remember, silence is shy. If silence hears you talking about her, she vanishes immediately!

Silence Is Delightful

It would be marvelous for each one of us if we could abandon all inner speech and abide in silent awareness of the present moment long enough to realize how delightful it is. Silence is so much more productive of wisdom and clarity than thinking. When one realizes that, silence becomes more attractive and important. The mind inclines toward it, seeks it out constantly, to the point where it engages in the thinking process only if it is really necessary, only if there is some point to it. Once we have realized that most of our thinking is really pointless, that it gets us nowhere and only gives us headaches, we gladly and easily spend much time in inner quiet. This second stage of the meditation, then, is *silent present-moment awareness.* We may want to spend much time developing just these first two stages, because if we can reach this point, we have come a long way indeed in our meditation. In that silent awareness of "just now," we experience much peace, joy, and consequent wisdom.

Stage Three: Silent Present-Moment Awareness of the Breath

If we want to go further, then instead of being silently aware of whatever comes into the mind, we choose silent present-moment awareness of just one thing. That one thing can be the experience of breathing, the idea of loving-kindness *(mettā),* a colored circle visualized in the mind *(kasiṇa),* or several other less common focal points for awareness. Here I will describe *silent present-moment awareness of the breath.*

Unity versus Diversity

Choosing to fix one's attention on one thing is letting go of diversity and moving to its opposite, unity. As the mind begins to unify and sustain attention on just one thing, the experience of peace, bliss, and power increases significantly. Here we discover that the diversity of consciousness is another heavy burden. It is like having six telephones on your desk ringing at the same time. Letting go of this diversity and permitting only one telephone (a private line at that) on your desk is such a relief that it generates bliss. The understanding that diversity is a heavy burden is crucial to being able to focus on the breath.

Careful Patience Is the Fastest Way

If you have developed silent awareness of the present moment carefully for long periods of time, then you will find it quite easy to turn that awareness onto the breath and follow that breath from moment to moment without interruption. This is because the two major obstacles to breath meditation have already been overcome. The first of these two obstacles is the mind's tendency to go off into the past or future, and the second obstacle is inner speech. This is why I teach the two preliminary stages of present-moment awareness and silent present-moment awareness as a solid preparation for deeper meditation on the breath.

It often happens that meditators start breath meditation when their minds are still jumping around between past and future, and when awareness is being drowned out by inner commentary. Without proper preparation they find breath meditation difficult, even impossible, and give up in frustration. They give up because they did not start at the right place. They did not perform the preparatory work before taking up the breath as a focus of their attention. However, if your mind has been well prepared by completing these first two stages, then when you turn to the breath you will be able to sustain your attention on it with ease. If you find it difficult to attend to your breath, this is a sign that you rushed the first two stages. Go back to the preliminary exercises. Careful patience is the fastest way!

It Does Not Matter Where You Watch the Breath

When you focus on the breath, you focus on the experience of the breath happening now. You experience what the breath is doing, whether it is going in, going out, or is in between. Some teachers say to watch the breath at the tip of the nose, some say to watch it at the abdomen, and some say to move it here and then move it there. I have found through experience that it does not matter where you watch the breath. In fact it is best not to locate the breath anywhere. If you locate the breath at the tip of your nose then it becomes “nose awareness,” not breath awareness, and if you locate it at your abdomen then it becomes “abdomen awareness.” Just ask yourself right now: “Am I breathing in or breathing out? How do I know?” There! The experience that tells you what the breath is doing, that is what you focus on. Let go of the concern about where this experience is located. Just focus on the experience itself.

The Tendency to Control Breathing

A common problem at this stage is the tendency to control the breathing, and this makes the breathing uncomfortable. To overcome this difficulty, imagine that you are just a passenger in a car looking through the window at your breath. You are not the driver, nor a backseat driver. So stop giving orders, let go, and enjoy the ride. Let the breath do the breathing and simply watch.

When you know the breath is going in or going out for about one hundred breaths in a row, not missing one, then you have achieved what I call the third stage of this meditation, which involves sustained attention on the breath. This again is more peaceful and joyful than the previous stage. To go deeper, you aim next for full sustained attention on the breath.

Stage Four: Full Sustained Attention on the Breath

The fourth stage occurs when your attention expands to take in every single moment of the breath. You know the in-breath at the very first moment, when the first sensation of inbreathing arises. Then you observe as those sensations develop gradually through the whole course of one in-breath, not missing even a moment of the in-breath. When that in-breath finishes, you know that moment. You see in your mind that last movement of the in-breath. You then see the next moment as a pause between breaths, and then many more moments of pause until the out-breath begins. You see the first moment of outbreathing and each subsequent sensation as the out-breath evolves, until the out-breath disappears when its function is complete. All this is done in silence and in the present moment.

You experience every part of each in-breath and out-breath continuously for many hundred breaths in a row. That is why this stage is called full sustained attention on the breath.You cannot reach this stage through force, through holding or gripping.You can attain this degree of stillness only by letting go of everything in the entire universe except for this momentary experience of the breath happening silently. Actually "you" do not reach this stage, the mind does. The mind does the work itself. The mind recognizes this stage to be a very peaceful and pleasant place to abide, just being alone with the breath. This is where the doer, the major part of one's ego, starts to disappear.

One finds that progress happens effortlessly at this stage of meditation. We just have to get out of the way, let go, and watch it all happen. The mind will automatically incline, if we only let it, toward this very simple, peaceful, and delicious unity of being alone with one thing, just being with the breath in each and every moment. This is the unity of mind, the unity in the moment, the unity in stillness.

The Beginning of the Beautiful Breath

The fourth stage is what I call the “springboard” of meditation, because from it one may dive into the blissful states. When we simply maintain this unity of consciousness by not interfering, the breath will begin to disappear. The breath appears to fade away as the mind focuses instead on what is at the center of the experience of breath, which is awesome peace, freedom, and bliss.

At this stage I introduce the term “beautiful breath.” Here the mind recognizes that this peaceful breath is extraordinarily beautiful. We are aware of this beautiful breath continuously, moment after moment, with no break in the chain of experience. We are aware only of the beautiful breath, without effort and for a very long time.

Now as I will explain further in the next chapter, when the breath disappears, all that is left is “the beautiful.” Disembodied beauty becomes the sole object of the mind. The mind is now taking the mind as its own object. We are no longer aware of the breath, body, thought, sound, or outside world. All that we are aware of is beauty, peace, bliss, light, or whatever our perception will later call it. We are experiencing only beauty, continuously, effortlessly, with *nothing* being beautiful! We have long ago let go of chatter, let go of descriptions and assessments. Here the mind is so still that it cannot say anything. One is just beginning to experience the first flowering of bliss in the mind. That bliss will develop, grow, and become very firm and strong. And then one may enter into those states of meditation called the *jhānas.*

I have described the first four stages of meditation. Each stage must be well developed before going on to the next. Please take a lot of time with these four initial stages, making them all firm and stable before proceeding. You should be able to maintain with ease the fourth stage, full sustained attention on the breath, during every moment of the breath without a single break for two or three hundred breaths in succession. I am not saying you should count the breaths during this stage; I am just giving an indication of the approximate span of time that one should be able to stay in stage four before proceeding further. In meditation, as I indicated earlier, careful patience is the fastest way!

2

The Basic Method of Meditation II

IN THIS CHAPTER we will consider three more advanced stages of meditation: stage five, full sustained attention on the beautiful breath; stage six, experiencing the beautiful nimitta; and stage seven, jhāna.

Stage Five: Full Sustained Attention on the Beautiful Breath

The fifth stage is called *full sustained attention on the beautiful breath.* Often this stage flows naturally and seamlessly from the previous stage. As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, when one's full attention rests easily and continuously on the experience of breathing with nothing interrupting the even flow of awareness, the breath calms down. It changes from a coarse, ordinary breath to a very smooth and peaceful "beautiful breath." The mind recognizes this beautiful breath and delights in it. It experiences a deepening of contentment. It is happy just to be watching this beautiful breath, and it does not need to be forced.

Do Nothing

“You” do not do anything. If you try to do something at this stage, you will disturb the whole process. The beauty will be lost. It’s like landing on a snake’s head in the game of snakes and ladders—you must go back many squares. From this stage of meditation on, the doer has to disappear. You are just a knower, passively observing.

A helpful trick at this stage is to break the inner silence for a moment and gently say to yourself:“calm.” That’s all. At this stage of the meditation, the mind is usually so sensitive that just a little nudge causes it to follow the instruction obediently. The breath calms down and the beautiful breath emerges.

When we are passively observing the beautiful breath in the moment, the perception of “in” (breath) or “out” (breath), or the beginning, middle, or end of a breath, should be allowed to disappear. All that remains will be the experience of the beautiful breath happening now. The mind is not concerned with what part of its cycle the breath is in or where in the body it occurs. Here we are simplifying the object of meditation. We are experiencing breath in the moment, stripped of all unnecessary details. We are moving beyond the duality of “in” and “out” and are just aware of a beautiful breath that appears smooth and continuous, hardly changing at all.

Do absolutely nothing and see how smooth, beautiful, and timeless the breath can be. See how calm you can allow it to be. Take time to savor the sweetness of the beautiful breath—ever calmer, ever sweeter.

Only “the Beautiful” Is Left

Soon the breath will disappear, not when you want it to but when there is enough calm, leaving only the sign of “the beautiful.”

A well-known passage from English literature might help clarify the experience of one’s breath disappearing. In Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* ,[4] Alice is startled to see the Cheshire Cat sitting on a bough of a nearby tree and grinning from ear to ear. Like all the strange creatures in Wonderland, the Cheshire Cat has the eloquence of a politician. Not only does the cat get the better of Alice in the ensuing conversation, but it also suddenly disappears and then, without warning, just as suddenly reappears.

> Alice said,“…and I wish you wouldn’t keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy!”
>
> “All right,” said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.
>
> “Well! I’ve often seen a cat without a grin,” thought Alice;“but a grin without a cat! It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!”

This story is an eerily accurate analogy for the meditation experience. Just as the Cheshire Cat disappeared and left only its grin, so the meditator’s body and breath disappear, leaving only the beautiful. For Alice, it was the most curious thing she ever saw in all her life. For the meditator it is also strange, to clearly experience a free-floating beauty with nothing to embody it, not even a breath.

The beautiful, or more precisely the sign of the beautiful, is the next stage on this meditation path. The Pāli word for “sign” is *nimitta*. So this next stage is called “experiencing the beautiful nimitta.”

Stage Six:

Experiencing the Beautiful Nimitta

This sixth stage is achieved when one lets go of the body, thought, and the five senses (including the awareness of the breath) so completely that only a beautiful mental sign, a nimitta, remains.

This pure mental object is a real object in the landscape of the mind *(citta),* and when it appears for the first time, it is extremely strange. One simply has not experienced anything like it before. Nevertheless, the mental activity we call perception searches through its memory bank of life experiences for something even a little bit similar. For most meditators, this disembodied beauty, this mental joy, is perceived as a beautiful light. Some see a white light, some a golden star, some a blue pearl, and so on. But it is not a light. The eyes are closed, and the sight consciousness has long been turned off. It is the mind consciousness freed for the first time from the world of the five senses. It is like the full moon—here standing for the radiant mind, coming out from behind the clouds—here standing for the world of the five senses. It is the mind manifesting —it is not a light, but for most it appears as a light. It is perceived as a light because this imperfect description is the best that perception can offer.

For other meditators, perception chooses to describe this first appearance of mind in terms of a physical sensation such as intense tranquillity or ecstasy. Again, the body consciousness (that which experiences pleasure and pain, heat and cold, and so on) has long since closed down, so this is not a physical feeling. It is just perceived as being similar to pleasure. Although some meditators experience sensations while others see light, the important fact is that they are all describing the same phenomenon. They all experience the same pure mental object, and these different details are added by their different perceptions.

The Qualities of a Nimitta

One can recognize a nimitta by the following six features: (1) it appears only after the fifth stage of the meditation, after the meditator has been with the beautiful breath for a long time; (2) it appears when the breath disappears; (3) it comes only when the external five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are completely absent; (4) it manifests only in the silent mind, when descriptive thought (inner speech) is totally absent; (5) it is strange but powerfully attractive; and (6) it is a beautifully simple object. I mention these features so that you may distinguish real nimittas from imaginary ones.

Sometimes when the nimitta first arises it may appear dull. In this case, one should immediately go back to the previous stage of the meditation, full sustained attention on the beautiful breath. One has moved to the nimitta too soon. Sometimes the nimitta is bright but unstable, flashing on and off like a lighthouse beacon and then disappearing. This too shows that the meditator has left the beautiful breath too early. One must be able to sustain one's attention on the beautiful breath with ease for a long, long time before the mind is capable of maintaining clear attention on the far more subtle nimitta. So you should train the mind on the beautiful breath. Train it patiently and diligently. Then when it is time to go on to the nimitta, it will be bright, stable, and easy to sustain.

The main reason why the nimitta can appear dull is that the depth of contentment is too shallow.You are still wanting something. Usually you want the bright nimitta or you want jhāna. Remember—and this is important—jhānas are states of letting go, incredibly deep states of contentment. So give away the hungry mind. Develop contentment on the beautiful breath, and nimittas and jhānas will happen by themselves.

Put another way, the nimitta is unstable because you, the doer, just will not stop interfering. The doer is the controller, the backseat driver, always getting involved where it does not belong and messing everything up. Meditation is a natural process of coming to rest, and it requires you to get out of the way completely. Deep meditation only occurs when you really let go. This means *really* letting go—to the point that the process becomes inaccessible to the doer.

A skillful means to achieve such profound letting go is to deliberately offer a gift of confidence to the nimitta. Very gently interrupt the silence for a moment and whisper, inside your mind, that you are giving complete trust to the nimitta, so that the doer can relinquish all control and just disappear. The mind, represented here by the nimitta before you, will then take over the process as you watch.

You do not need to do anything here, because the intense beauty of the nimitta is more than capable of holding your attention without your assistance. Be careful here not to start asking questions like "What is this?" "Is this jhāna?""What should I do next?" which all come from the doer trying to get involved again. Questioning disturbs the process. You may assess everything once the journey is over. A good scientist only assesses the experiment at the end, when all the data are in.

There is no need to pay attention to the shape or edges of the nimitta: "Is it round or oval?" "Is the edge clear or fuzzy?" These are all unnecessary queries, which just lead to more diversity, more duality of inside and outside, and more disturbance. Let the mind incline where it wants, which is usually to the center of the nimitta. The center is where the most beautiful part lies, where the light is most brilliant and pure. Let go and just enjoy the ride as the attention gets drawn right into the center, or as the light expands and envelops you totally. Let the mind merge into the bliss. Then let the seventh stage of this path of meditation, the jhāna, occur.

Stage Seven: Jhāna

There are two common obstacles at the door into jhāna: exhilaration and fear. In exhilaration, the mind becomes excited: “Wow, this is it!” If the mind thinks like this, then the jhāna is unlikely to happen. This “wow!” response needs to be subdued in favor of absolute passivity.You can leave all the wows until after emerging from the jhāna, where they properly belong.

The more likely obstacle, though, is fear. Fear arises from the recognition of the sheer power and bliss of the jhāna, or else at the recognition that to go fully inside the jhāna something must be left behind—*you!* The doer is silent before entering the jhāna, but it is still there. Inside the jhāna, however, the doer is completely gone. Only the knower is still functioning. One is fully aware, but all the controls are now beyond reach. One cannot even form a single thought, let alone make a decision. The will is frozen, and this can be scary for beginners, who have never had the experience of being so stripped of control and yet so fully awake. The fear is of surrendering an essential part of one’s identity.

This fear can be overcome through confidence in the Buddha’s teachings, and through recognizing and being drawn to the enticing bliss just ahead. The Buddha often said that this bliss of jhāna should not be feared but should be followed, developed, and practiced often (e.g., *Laṭukikopama Sutta*, MN 66,21). So before fear arises, offer your full confidence to that bliss, and maintain faith in the Buddha’s teachings and the example of the noble disciples. Trust the Dhamma, the Buddha’s teachings, and let the jhāna warmly embrace you in an effortless, bodiless, ego-less, and blissful experience that will be the most profound of your life. Have the courage to fully relinquish control for a while and experience all this for yourself.

A jhāna will last a long time. It does not deserve to be called jhāna if it lasts only a few minutes. The higher jhānas usually persist for many hours. Once inside, there is no choice. One will emerge from the jhāna only when the mind is ready to come out, when the accumulated "fuel" of relinquishment is all used up. Each jhāna is such a still and satisfying state of consciousness that its very nature is to persist for a very long time.

Another feature of jhāna is that it occurs only after the nimitta is discerned, as described above. Furthermore, one should know that during any jhāna it is impossible to experience the body (e.g., physical pain), hear a sound from outside, or produce any thought—not even a "good" thought. There is just a clear singleness of perception, an experience of nondual bliss that continues unchanging for a very long time. This is not a trance but a state of heightened awareness. I say this so that you may know for yourself whether what you take to be a jhāna is real or imaginary.

I will give particular attention to the jhāna in chapters 9 through 11.

The Great Vipassanā versus Samatha Debate

Some traditions speak of two types of meditation, insight meditation *(vipassanā)* and calm meditation *(samatha).* In fact the two are indivisible facets of the same process. Calm is the peaceful happiness born of meditation; insight is the clear understanding born of the same meditation. Calm leads to insight and insight leads to calm.

For those who are misled to conceive of all the instructions offered here as "just samatha practice" (calming) without regard to vipassanā (insight), please know that this is neither vipassanā nor samatha. It is called *bhāvanā* (mental development). This method was taught by the Buddha (AN IV,125-27; MN 151,13-19) and repeated in the forest tradition of Northeast Thailand, with which my teacher, Ven. Ajahn Chah, was associated. Ajahn Chah often said that samatha and vipassanā cannot be separated, nor can the pair be developed apart from right view, right thought, right moral conduct, and so forth. Samatha and vipassanā, Ajahn Chah said, are like two sides of one hand. In the original Buddhist tradition they are inseparable. Indeed, to make progress in the seven stages of meditation I have described, the meditator needs an understanding and acceptance of the Buddha's teachings, and one's virtue must be pure.

Insight meditation is an inherent part of the method of meditation described so far. In particular, this meditation can produce insight or understanding in three important areas: insight into problems affecting daily happiness, insight into the way of meditation, and insight into the nature of "you."

Insight into Problems Affecting Daily Happiness

When a problem arises—a death, a sickness, some other type of loss, or even a hurtful argument—it is not only painful but confusing. It is like being lost in dense and dangerous jungle. When one is lost in the forest, one should climb to the top of a tall tree or tower and look for a distant landmark, such as a river or road that leads to safety. Having gained perspective and an overview of the situation, confusion vanishes. In this simile, the jungle stands for the tangled problems of daily life. Climbing to the top of a tower or tree refers to the practice of meditation, which leads to the calm, cool air where insight or perspective is gained. Thus if you have a heavy problem, do not think about it endlessly. Then you are merely wandering around lost in your jungle. Instead, carefully follow the instructions for the method of meditation described in this chapter and the previous one, and you will leave your problem behind.You will rise above your jungle, and from that vantage point you will gain insight into what is to be done. The answer will appear out of the calm.

At the end of each meditation session, spend two or three minutes reviewing all that has happened during that session. There is no need to "take notes" (that is, remind oneself to remember) during the meditation, because you will find it easy to remember the important features at the end. Was it peaceful or frustrating? Now ask yourself why. What did you do to experience peace, or what caused the feeling of frustration? If your mind wandered off into fantasy land, was that peaceful and useful? Such reviewing and inquiry *only at the end of the session* generates insight into how to meditate and what meditation is. No one starts out as a perfect meditator.

The insights gained by reviewing your meditation at the end of each session will deepen your experience of meditation and overcome hindrances. Developing this type of insight into your meditation is important, and I will come back to it in part 2.

Suffice it to say at this point that you need insight to achieve each of the stages I have described. To be able to let go of your thoughts, for example, you need some insight into what "letting go" is. The further you develop these stages, the more profound your insight will be. And if you reach as far as jhāna, then it will change your whole understanding.

By the way, these insights into the way of meditation also work for problems in daily life. This is because the tendencies that create obstacles in meditation are the same clumsy attitudes that cause difficulties in life. Meditation is like a gym in which you develop the powerful mental muscles of calm and insight, which you then use both in further meditation and in daily life to bring happiness and success.

Insight into the Nature of "You"

The deepest and most elusive insight is into who you really are. This insight is gained not through belief or thinking but only by meditation, by becoming absolutely still, releasing the mind, and then knowing the mind. The Buddha compared the mind to the full moon at night hidden behind clouds. The clouds stand for the activity of the five senses and thought. In deep meditation, the five senses recede to reveal the pure and radiant mind. In jhāna, you can actually observe the pure mind.

In order to know the inner secrets of the mind, one must continue to observe it in the stillness of jhāna, with no thought at all, for a very long time. One simile tells of a thousand-petaled lotus that closes its petals at night and opens them at dawn. When the first rays of the morning sun warm the outermost row of petals, they begin to open, which allows the sun to warm the next row of petals. Soon those petals open too, and the sun's warmth falls on the next row, and so on. But if a cloud appears and obscures the sun, then the lotus closes its petals. It takes a long period of unbroken sunshine to warm the lotus enough to open the innermost row of petals and reveal its secrets.

The lotus in this simile stands for the mind; the sun's warmth stands for still attention; and the cloud stands for a thought or mental agitation that destroys the stillness. I shall develop this simile later. For now, let me say that these inner secrets are beyond your imagining. Some meditators stop at an inner row of petals and mistakenly think,"This is it." Then the stillness breaks and the lotus closes in a twinkling. This is false enlightenment. When your meditation is so profound that you can remain in stillness for several hours, observing the mind freed from the hindrances, and watching the innermost row of petals open fully to reveal the jewel in the heart of the lotus, then you will realize the ultimate insight, the truth of who you are. Find out for yourself!

In the previous chapter, I counseled that patience is the fastest way to proceed. This also holds true for the three stages of meditation discussed in this chapter. These are all stages of letting go, each dependent upon the ones preceding. In the end, to enter into jhāna one has to really let go. This is a profound letting go made possible by careful and diligent practice.

There is much more to meditation than I have covered so far. In these two chapters only the basic method has been described: seven stages that culminate in the first jhāna. Much more needs to be said about the hindrances, qualities of mindfulness, other meditation objects, and more. Let us begin our detailed study by turning our attention to the five hindrances and how they are overcome.

3

The Hindrances to Meditation I

IN THIS CHAPTER and the next I will explain in detail the five hindrances, obstacles that you will meet in your meditation and that you should learn to overcome. These obstacles to deep meditation are called in the Pāli language *nīvarana*. Literally that means “closing a door” or “obstructing entering into something,” and this is exactly what the hindrances do. They stop you from entering into the deep absorption states, or jhānas. They also obstruct or weaken wisdom and strengthen delusion. So if one is going to say anything in Buddhism about the enemies to meditation, one can say that the five hindrances are Public Enemy Number One. *They stop people from becoming enlightened,* and it’s precisely for this reason that understanding these five hindrances and overcoming them is crucial. When you don’t fully understand them, you cannot overcome them.

Some teachers fail to explain the hindrances clearly enough, especially the hindrances that are very subtle. These refined hindrances prevent you from getting into deep meditation. If you do not even try to identify them and surpass them, then they will hold sway over your mind. You will be obstructed from enjoying the bliss of the mind and from developing the great insights of enlightenment.

Basically, these five hindrances stand between you and enlightenment. When you know them, you have a good chance of overcoming them. If you have not achieved the jhānas yet, it means you have not fully understood these five hindrances. If you have gotten into such deep states, then you have overcome the hindrances. It’s as simple as that.

The Buddha named the five hindrances as follows: sensory desire *(kāma-cchanda),* ill will *(vyāpāda),* sloth and torpor *(thīna-middha),* restlessness and remorse *(uddhacca-kukkucca),* and doubt *(vicikicchā).* This is the usual order in which the Buddha lists them, and this is the order in which they will be presented here, too.

The First Hindrance—Sensory Desire

Kāma-cchanda, or sensory desire, is first on the list of hindrances because of its importance. It is the major obstacle preventing one from entering deep meditation. Few meditators fully understand its scope. It is not just sensory desire as that term is commonly understood. First of all, the Pāli word *kāma* means anything pertaining to the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. *Chanda* means to delight in or agree with. Together the compound kāma-cchanda means "delight, interest, involvement with the world of the five senses."

For example, when we are meditating and hear a sound, why can't we simply ignore it? Why does it disturb us so? Many years ago in Thailand the local villages surrounding our monastery held a party. The noise from the loudspeakers was so loud that it seemed to destroy the peace in our monastery. So we complained to our teacher, Ajahn Chah, that the noise was disturbing our meditation. The great master replied, "It is not the noise that disturbs you, it is you who disturb the noise!"

In the above example kāma-cchanda was the mind getting involved with the sound. Similarly, when your meditation is interrupted by a pain in your legs, say, then it is not the pain that disturbs you but it is you who disturb the pain. If you had been mindful, you would have seen your awareness go out to your body, becoming interested in sensations again. That was kāma-cchanda at work.

It is difficult to overcome kāma-cchanda because we are so attached to our five senses and their affairs. Whatever we are attached to we find impossible to release. To understand this attachment it is useful to examine the connection between our five senses and our body. It is commonly claimed that the five senses are there to protect our body, but insight will tell you the opposite: that the body is there to provide a vehicle for your five senses to play in the world. You will also notice that when the five senses disappear so does your body. Letting go of one means letting go of the other.

Abandoning Kāma-cchanda Little by Little

You can't simply decide to let go of the five senses and the body through a single effort of will. The abandoning of kāma-cchanda in meditation is achieved little by little.You start by choosing a comfortable, quiet place in which to meditate.You may sit on a chair if it is more comfortable for you, remembering that even the Buddha sat on a chair sometimes. When you first close your eyes you will be unable to feel much of the body. In the same way that it takes a few minutes to see when you go out from a well-lit room into the dark, so it takes a few minutes to become sensitive to your bodily feelings. Thus the final adjustments to our body posture are made a few minutes after closing our eyes.

Indulging kāma-cchanda in this way will subdue it for a while. Your body will feel comfortable and the five senses satisfied, but not for long. You must use this initial freedom to start placing the mind beyond the reach of the five senses.You begin with present-moment awareness. Most if not all of our past and future is occupied by the affairs of our five senses. Our memories are of physical sensations, tastes, sounds, smells, or sights. Our plans are likewise filled with five-sense business. Through achieving present-moment awareness we cut off much of kāma-cchanda.

The next stage of meditation is silent present-moment awareness. In this you abandon all thought. The Buddha identified an aspect of kāmacchanda that is called *kāma-vitakka,* meaning thinking about the five-sense world. For the new meditator, the most obvious form of kāma- vitakka is sexual fantasy. One can use up many hours, especially on a long retreat, with this type of kāma-vitakka. This obstacle to progress in meditation is transcended by realizing, through insight or faith, that total freedom from the five senses (i.e., jhāna) is more ecstatic and profound than the very best of sexual experiences. A monk or nun gives up their sexuality not out of fear or repression, but out of recognition of something superior. Even thoughts about lunch belong to kāma-vitakka. They disturb the silence. And few meditators realize that noting bodily sensations, for example thinking to oneself "breath going in" or "hearing a sound" or "feeling a stabbing pain," is also part of kāma-vitakka and a hindrance to progress.

Lao Tzu, the great Taoist sage, would allow one student to accompany him on his evening walk, as long as the student maintained silence. One evening, as they reached a mountain ridge, the student remarked, "What a beautiful sunset." Lao Tzu never let that student accompany him again. When others asked why, the master explained, "When that student said, 'What a beautiful sunset,' he was no longer watching the sunset, he was only watching the words." That is why you have to abandon noting, for watching the words is not being mindful of the thing it tries in vain to describe.

In silent present-moment awareness it is as if the world of the five senses is now confined in a cage, unable to roam or create any mischief. Next, in order to abandon the five senses completely and with them the body, you choose to focus your mindfulness on a small part of the five-sense world to the exclusion of the rest. You focus your mindfulness on the physical sensation of the breath, paying no attention to other sensations in your body, nor to sounds and so on. The breath becomes the stepping stone from the world of the five senses over to the realm of the mind.

When you succeed in full sustained attention on the breath you will notice the absence of any sound. You never recognize the moment that hearing stops because its nature is to fade away gradually. Such a fading, like physical death, is a process not an event. Usually you discover when reviewing the meditation at the end of the sitting (as advised in chapter 2) that for a certain period your mind was impervious to any sound. You also notice that your body had disappeared, that you could not feel your hands, nor did you receive any messages from your legs. All that you knew was the feeling of the breath.

Some meditators become alarmed when parts of their body seem to vanish. This shows their strong attachment to their body. This is kāmacchanda at work, hindering progress in their meditation. Usually you soon become familiar with the fading away of bodily sensations and start to delight in the wonderful tranquillity beyond their reach. It is the freedom and joy born of letting go that repeatedly encourages you to abandon your attachments.

Soon the breath disappears and the awesome nimitta fills your mind. It is only at this stage that you have fully abandoned kāma-cchanda, your involvement in the world of the five senses. For when the nimitta is established, all five senses are extinguished, and your body is out of range. The first and major hindrance has now been overcome and it is blissful. You are at the door of the jhānas. This is the method for abandoning kāma-cchanda little by little. It is why the stages of meditation are taught in this way. As the Buddha said in the Jātakas (Ja 4,173) “the more you abandon the five-sense world, the more you experience bliss. If you want to experience complete bliss, then completely abandon the five-sense world.”

The Second Hindrance—Ill Will

The second hindrance, ill will or *vyāpāda,* is also a major obstacles to deep meditation, especially for Western meditators. The usual understanding of this second hindrance is anger toward another person. But that is not the full extent of ill will, because it is more likely to be toward yourself or even toward the meditation object.

Ill Will toward Yourself

Ill will toward yourself can manifest as not allowing yourself to bliss out, become peaceful, or become successful in meditation. There are many people who have very deep guilt complexes. This is mostly a Western trait because of the way that many of us have been brought up.

Ill will toward yourself is something that you should watch out for in meditation. It may be the main hindrance that is stopping you from getting deep into meditation. This problem was pointed out to me quite a few years ago when one of the Western nuns was telling me about her meditation. Often she got very deep in her meditation, almost into jhānas. She was at the door, she said, and the thing that stopped her was the feeling that she did not deserve this happiness! It was ill will toward herself that stopped her, the reluctance to allow herself bliss. I've seen that in many people since. Sometimes when the meditation gets peaceful, when happiness comes up, we think that there must be something wrong. We have ill will toward ourselves, so we don't permit ourselves to be happy and free.

In the nun's case, she saw very clearly that the only thing between her and jhānas was a subtle form of the hindrance of ill will. She didn't think she deserved so much bliss. *You do deserve so much bliss.* Why should you not? There's nothing against it. There are some kinds of bliss in this world that are illegal. There are others that break the Buddhist precepts, cause disease, or have terrible side effects. But jhānas have no bad side effects, they're not illegal, and the Buddha specifically encouraged them.

If you look very carefully at the way you meditate, you may find that you encounter the hindrance of ill will, but not at that last step before jhānas.You encounter it at some earlier stage of meditation when you do not allow yourself delight. Maybe you prefer to sit through pain rather than enjoy peace and happiness. Perhaps you think that you do not deserve happiness, bliss, and freedom.

An aversion to inner happiness is a sure sign of guilt. When someone is found guilty, punishment usually follows, maybe imposed by a court of law. Guilt and punishment are inseparable in our culture and in our minds. If we feel guilty about something, the next thing we think of is punishing ourselves—denying ourselves some type of pleasure, happiness, or freedom. People in the West just keep on seeking punishment. It's crazy!

To overcome that hindrance do some loving-kindness meditation. Give yourself a break. Say to yourself, “The door to my heart is open to all of me. I allow myself happiness. I allow myself peace. I have goodwill toward myself, enough goodwill to let myself become peaceful and to bliss out on this meditation.” If you find it hard to extend loving-kindness toward yourself, ask why. There may be a deep-seated guilt complex inside, and you still expect punishment. You haven’t given yourself unconditional forgiveness.

A beautiful ethic of Buddhism is that it does not matter what anyone else does to you or how long they have done it to you; it doesn’t matter how unfair, cruel, or undeserving their treatment has been—you may still forgive them absolutely. I hear people saying that sometimes there are things you cannot forgive. That’s not Buddhism! *There’s nothing, absolutely nothing, you can’t forgive in Buddhism.* Some years ago, a demented man went to a primary school in Scotland and killed many small children. At the religious service after the massacre, a prominent cleric asked God not to forgive this man, arguing that some things you cannot forgive! My heart sank when I heard that a religious leader would not offer forgiveness and show the way to heal people’s pain in the aftermath of tragedy.

As far as Buddhism is concerned, you can forgive everything. Your forgiveness is healing. Your forgiveness solves old problems and never creates new ones. But because of ingrained attitudes you may have toward yourself, you cannot forgive yourself. Sometimes the problem is buried deep inside. Sometimes you’ve forgotten it. You just know there is something inside of you that you feel guilty about, that you can’t forgive. You have some reason for denying yourself freedom, jhāna, and enlightenment. That ill will toward yourself may be the main reason why your meditation is not successful. Check that one out.

Ill Will toward the Meditation Object

Ill will toward the meditation object is a common problem for people who have been meditating on the breath without much success yet. I say “yet” because it’s only a matter of time. *Everyone* will have success if they follow the instructions. But if you haven’t succeeded yet, you may have some ill will toward meditation or the meditation object. You may sit down and think, “Oh, here we go again,” “This is going to be difficult,” “I don’t really want to do this,”“I have to do this because it’s what meditators do,” or “I’ve got to be a good Buddhist, and this is what Buddhists are supposed to do.” If you start the meditation with ill will toward meditation, doing it but not liking it, then it’s not going to work. You are putting a hindrance in front of yourself straightaway.

I love meditation. I enjoy it so much. Once when I led a meditation retreat I said to my fellow monks upon arriving, “Great, a meditation retreat!” I got up early every morning really looking forward to it.“Wow, I’m on meditation retreat. I don’t have to do all the other stuff that I do in the monastery.” I love meditation so much, and I’ve got so much goodwill toward it that there isn’t the slightest bit of aversion. Basically I’m a “meditation junkie,” and if you’ve got that sort of attitude, then you find that the mind, as the Buddha said,“leaps toward meditation” (AN IX, 41).

I like to use this simile: you are walking down the street when you see a dear old friend on the opposite side of the road. You’ve had such good times together. It doesn’t matter where you are going or what you are supposed to be doing, you can’t help but rush across the street, grab your friend by the hand, and give your friend a hug.“Come for a cup of coffee. I don’t care if I’ll be late for an appointment. It’s such a long time since I’ve seen you. Come on, let’s have some time together.” Meditation is like a dear old friend that you want to spend time with. You’re willing to drop everything else. If I see a meditation a mile away I just run toward it and give it a good old hug and take it for a cup of coffee somewhere. And as for the meditation object, the breath, we’ve had such good times together, my breath and I. We’re the best of mates. If you regard the breath with that sort of goodwill, you can see why it’s so easy to watch the breath in your meditation.

The opposite, of course, is when you know you have to be with this frigging breath and you don’t like it. You’ve had so much difficulty with this breath. You see it coming along on the other side of the street and you think,“Oh my God, here it is again.” You try to duck away and hide behind a lamppost so it doesn’t see you. You just want to escape. Unfortunately people do develop such ill will toward the breath. If it’s not pointed out to them, they will regard meditation as a chore. There’s no happiness in it. It becomes something like going to the gym. “If there’s no pain, then there’s no gain.”You lift weights until it really hurts, because you think you are going to get somewhere that way. If that's the way you enter meditation, then you've got no hope.

So cultivate goodwill toward the meditation object. Program yourself to delight in this meditation. Think,"Wow! Beautiful! All I've got to do is just sit and do nothing else—nothing to build, no letters to write, no phone calls to make. I just need to sit here and be with my good old friend, my breath." If you can do that you've abandoned the hindrance of ill will, and you've developed the opposite—loving-kindness toward your breath.

I use the following method to overcome any ill will toward my breath. I look upon my breath like a newborn son or daughter. Would you leave your baby at the shopping mall and just forget it? Would you drop it as you're walking on the road? Would you lose sight of it for long? Why is it that we can't keep our attention on the breath? Again this is because we lack kindness toward our breath, we don't delight in it, and we don't appreciate it. If you appreciated your breath as much as your child or someone else who is very, very dear to you and very vulnerable, you would never drop, forget, or abandon it.You would always be mindful of it. But if you have ill will toward the breath, you'll find yourself wandering off and forgetting it.You're trying to lose it, because you don't like it all that much. That's why you lose your meditation object.

To sum up, ill will is a hindrance, and you overcome that hindrance by compassion to all others, forgiveness toward yourself, loving-kindness toward the meditation object, goodwill toward the meditation, and friendship toward the breath. You can have loving-kindness toward silence and the present moment too. When you care for these friends who reside in the mind, you overcome any aversion toward them as meditation objects. *When you have loving-kindness toward the meditation object, you do not need much effort to hold it.* You just love it so much that it becomes effortless to be with.

4

The Hindrances to Meditation II

WE TURN NOW to the remaining three hindrances—sloth and torpor *(thīna-middha),* restlessness and remorse *(uddhacca-kukkucca),* and doubt *(vicikicchā)*—and then examine what happens when the hindrances are overcome.

The Third Hindrance—Sloth and Torpor

The third hindrance is sloth and torpor. I don't need to describe it in detail, because I'm sure we know it all too well through our experience of meditation. We sit in meditation and don't really know what we are watching, whether it's the present moment, silence, the breath, or whatever. This is because the mind is dull. It's as if there are no lights turned on inside. It's all gray and blurry.

Making Peace with Sloth and Torpor

The most profound and effective way of overcoming sloth and torpor is to make peace with the dullness and stop fighting it! When I was a young monk in the forest monasteries in Thailand and became sleepy during the 3:15 A.M. sitting, I would struggle like hell to overpower the dullness. I would usually fail. But when I did succeed in overcoming my sleepiness, restlessness would replace it. So I would calm down the restlessness and fall back into sloth and torpor. My meditation was like a pendulum swinging between extremes and never finding the middle. It took many years to understand what was going on.

The Buddha advocated investigation, not fighting. So I examined where my sloth and torpor came from. I had been meditating at 3:15 in the morning, having slept very little, I was malnourished, an English monk in a hot tropical jungle —what would you expect! The dullness was the effect of natural causes. I let go and made peace with my sleepiness. I stopped fighting and let my head droop. Who knows, I might even have snored. When I stopped fighting sloth and torpor it did not last all that long. Moreover, when it passed I was left with peace and not with restlessness. I had found the middle of my pendulum swing and I could observe my breath easily from then on.

Dullness in meditation is the result of a tired mind, usually one that has been overworking. Fighting that dullness makes you even more exhausted. Resting allows the energy to return to the mind. To understand this process, I will now introduce the two halves of the mind: *the knower* and *the doer*. The knower is the passive half of the mind that simply receives information. The doer is the active half that responds with evaluating, thinking, and controlling. The knower and the doer share the same source of mental energy. Thus, when you are doing a lot, when you have a busy lifestyle and are struggling to get on, the doer consumes most of your mental energy, leaving only a pittance for the knower. When the knower is starved of mental energy you experience dullness.

At a retreat I led in Sydney a few years ago, a retreatant arrived late from her high-stress job as an executive in the city. In her first sitting that evening her mind was almost as dead as a corpse. So I gave her my special teaching on how to overcome her sloth and torpor: I told her to rest. For the next three days she slept in until dawn, went back to bed again after breakfast, and had a long nap after lunch. What a brilliant meditator! After three days of no fighting, giving hardly any mental energy to the doer but letting it flow to the knower, her mind brightened up. In another three days she had caught up with the rest of the group in her progress through the stages. By the end of the retreat she was way ahead and one of the star meditators of that retreat.

The most profound and effective way to overcome sloth and torpor is to stop fighting your mind. Stop trying to change things and instead let things be. Make peace not war with sloth and torpor. Then your mental energy will be freed to flow into the knower, and your sloth and torpor will naturally disappear.

Giving Value to Awareness

Another method for overcoming sloth and torpor is to give more value to awareness. All Buddhist traditions say that human life is valuable and precious, especially a life like this one where you have encountered the Buddha's teachings. Now you have the opportunity to practice. You may not realize how many lifetimes it has taken and how much merit you've had to accumulate just to get where you are now. You've invested lifetimes of good karma to get this close to the Dhamma. Reflecting like this means you will incline less to sloth and torpor and more to bright awareness.

The path of meditation sometimes comes to a fork in the road. The left path leads to sloth and torpor while the right path leads to bright awareness. With experience you will recognize this fork. This is the point in meditation where you can choose between the alley to sloth and torpor or the highway to mindful stillness. Taking the left path you give up both the doer and the knower. Taking the right path you let go of the doer but keep the knower. When you value awareness you will automatically choose the right path of bright awareness.

Sloth and Torpor and Ill Will

Sometimes sloth and torpor is the result of ill will, the second hindrance. When I used to visit Australian prisons to teach meditation, I would often hear the following prison proverb: “an extra hour of sleep is an hour off your sentence.” People who don’t like where they are will try to escape into dullness. In the same way, meditators who easily get negative will tend to drift into sloth and torpor. Ill will is the problem.

In our monastery in Thailand we would meditate all night once a week. During those all-night sittings, sloth and torpor would regularly conquer me an hour or two after midnight. Since it was my first year as a monk, I reflected that less than twelve months previously I would spend all night at parties, rock concerts, and clubs. I recalled that I never experienced sloth and torpor when listening to the music of the Doors at 2 A.M. Why? It became clear that when you are enjoying what you are doing then you don’t tend to get sloth and torpor, but when you don’t like what you are doing then sloth and torpor comes in. I did not like those all-night sits. I thought they were a stupid idea. I did them because I had to. I had ill will, and that was the cause of my sloth and torpor. When I changed my attitude and put joy into the all-night sittings, making them fun, then sloth and torpor rarely came. So you should investigate whether your sloth and torpor is the result of an attitude problem—the attitude of ill will.

Using Fear

When I was a lay Buddhist I attended a Zen retreat in the north of England. It was very early in the morning, and the meditation hall was freezing cold. People had their blankets around them. When you meditate with a blanket anywhere close to you, you tend to get sleepy. The teacher was walking up and down with a big stick, and the fellow next to me who had started nodding got hit. Everyone's sloth and torpor suddenly disappeared right then. We only needed one person to get hit and that was enough. The problem was that the fear that woke me up remained with me, preventing further progress. Experience teaches that you can't generate wholesome states like peace and freedom by using unwholesome methods like fear or violence.

In the old forest tradition of northeast Thailand, monks would meditate in dangerous places such as platforms high in the trees, on the edge of cliffs, or in jungles full of tigers. The ones who survived said they got good meditation, but you never heard from the monks that didn't survive!

The Fourth Hindrance—

Restlessness and Remorse

The next hindrance, restlessness and remorse *(uddhacca-kukkucca),* is among the most subtle of hindrances. The main component of this hindrance is restlessness of mind. But first let me briefly address the matter of remorse.

Remorse

Remorse is the result of hurtful things that you may have done or said. In other words, it is a result of bad conduct. If any remorse comes up in meditation, instead of dwelling on it, you should forgive yourself. Everyone makes mistakes. The wise are not people who never make mistakes, but those who forgive themselves and learn from their mistakes. Some people have so much remorse that they think they can never become enlightened.

The story of Angulimāla is a well-known story in the Buddhist scriptures (MN 86). Angulimāla was a serial killer. He killed 999 people. He cut off a finger from each of his victims and put them in a garland he hung around his neck. The one-thousandth victim was to be the Buddha but, of course, you can't kill a buddha. Instead the Buddha "killed him," killed his bad ways, killed his defilements. Angulimāla became a Buddhist monk. Even a serial killer like Angulimāla could achieve the jhānas and become fully enlightened. So have you ever killed anybody? Are you a serial killer? You probably haven't done anything like that. If such people can become enlightened, surely you can. No matter what bad things you've done in your past or what you feel remorseful about, always remember Angulimāla. Then you won't feel so bad about yourself. Forgiveness, letting go of the past, is what overcomes remorse.

Restlessness arises because we do not appreciate the beauty of contentment. We do not acknowledge the sheer pleasure of doing nothing. We have a faultfinding mind rather than a mind that appreciates what's already there. *Restlessness in meditation is always a sign of not finding joy in what's here.* Whether we find joy or not depends on the way we train our perception. It's within our power to change the way we look at things. We can look at a glass of water and perceive it as very beautiful, or we can think of it as ordinary. In meditation, we can see the breath as dull and routine, or we can see it as very beautiful and unique. If we look upon the breath as something of great value, then we won't get restless. We won't go around looking for something else. That's what restlessness is, going around looking for something else to do, something else to think about, somewhere else to go—anywhere but here and now. Restlessness is one of the major hindrances, along with sensory desire. Restlessness makes it so hard to sit still for very long.

I begin meditation with present-moment awareness, just to overcome the coarse restlessness that says,"I want to be somewhere other than right here, right now." No matter what this place is, no matter how comfortable you make it, restlessness will always say it's not good enough. It looks at your meditation cushion and says it's too big or too small, too hard or too wide. It looks upon a meditation retreat center and says, "It's not good enough. We should have three meals a day. We should have room service."

Contentment is the opposite of a faultfinding mind. You should develop the perception of contentment with whatever you have, wherever you are, as much as you can.

Beware of finding fault in your meditation. Sometimes you may think, "I'm not going deep enough. I've been watching the present moment for so long, and I'm not getting anywhere." That thought is the very cause of restlessness. It doesn't matter how the meditation is going in your opinion. Be absolutely content with it and it will go deeper. If you're dissatisfied with your progress, then you're only making it worse. So learn to be content with the present moment. Forget about jhānas, just be content to be here and now, in this moment. As that contentment deepens, it will actually give rise to jhānas.

Watch the silence and be content to be silent. If you're truly content, you don't need to say anything. Don't most inner conversations take the form of complaining, attempting to change things, or wanting to do something else? Or escaping into the world of thoughts and ideas? Thinking indicates a lack of contentment. If you're truly contented, then you're still and quiet. See if you can deepen your contentment, because it is the antidote for restlessness.

Even if you have an ache in the body and don't feel well, you can change your perception and regard that as something quite fascinating, even beautiful. See if you can be content with the ache or pain. See if you can allow it to be. A few times during my life as a monk I have been in quite severe pain. Instead of trying to escape, which is restlessness, I turned my mind around to completely accept the pain and be content with it. I have found that it is possible to be content with even severe pain. If you can do that, the worst part of the pain disappears along with the restlessness. There's no wanting to get rid of it. You're completely still with the feeling. The restlessness that accompanies pain is probably the worst part. Get rid of restlessness through contentment, and you can even have fun with pain.

Develop contentment with whatever you have—the present moment, the silence, the breath. Wherever you are, develop that contentment, and from that contentment—out of the very center of that contentment—you'll find your meditation will deepen. So if you ever see restlessness in your mind, remember the word *contentment*. Contentment looks for what is right, and it can keep you still. But restlessness will always make you a slave. There is a simile that the Buddha used (MN 39,14). Restlessness is like having a tyrannical master or mistress always telling you:"Go and get this," "Go and do that," "That's not right," "Clean that up better," and never giving you a moment of rest. That tyrant is the faultfinding mind. Subdue this tyrant through contentment.

After you've overcome the more general forms of restlessness, a very refined form often occurs at the deeper stages of meditation. I am referring to the time when you first see a nimitta. Because of restlessness, you just can't leave it alone.You mess around with it.You aren't content with the nimitta as it appears right now. You want something more. You get excited. Restlessness is one of the hindrances that can easily destroy the nimitta. You've arrived already.You don't have to do any more. Just leave it alone. Be content with it and it will develop by itself. That's what contentment is—complete nondoing, just sitting there watching a nimitta blossom into a jhāna. If it takes an hour, if it takes five minutes, if it never even happens, you're content. That's the way to get into jhānas. If the nimitta comes and goes, that's a sign of restlessness in the mind. If you can sustain attention effortlessly, restlessness has been overcome.

The Fifth Hindrance—Doubt

The last of the hindrances is called doubt *(vicikicchā).* Doubt can be toward the teaching, about the teacher, or toward yourself.

Regarding doubt toward the teaching, you should have enough confidence by now to know that some beautiful results come from practicing meditation. You may have experienced many of them already. Allow those positive experiences to strengthen your confidence that meditation is worthwhile. Sitting in meditation, developing the mind in stillness, and especially developing the mind in jhānas are all tremendously worthwhile and will give you clarity, happiness, and understanding of the Buddha's teachings.

With regard to teachers, they are often like coaches of sports teams. Their job is to teach from their own experience and, more important, to inspire students with words and deeds. But before you put your confidence in a teacher, check them out. Observe their behavior and see for yourself if they are practicing what they preach. If they really know what they are talking about, then they will be ethical, restrained, and inspiring. Only if teachers lead by example—a good example, that is—should you place your confidence in them.

Self-doubt—which thinks,"I'm hopeless, I can't do this, I'm useless, I'm sure everyone else who practices meditation, except me, has got jhānas and is already enlightened"—is often overcome with the help of a teacher who inspires and encourages you. It's the teacher's job to say,"Yes, you can achieve all of these things. Many other people have achieved them, so why not you?" Give yourself encouragement. Have confidence that you can achieve whatever you want. In fact, if you have sufficient determination and confidence, then it's only a matter of time before you succeed. The only people who fail are those who give up.

Doubt can also be directed toward what you are experiencing now: "What is this? Is this jhāna? Is this present-moment awareness?" Such doubts are hindrances. They are inappropriate during meditation. Just make the mind as peaceful as you can. Let go and enjoy the peace and happiness. Afterward, you can review the meditation and ask,"What was that? That was really interesting. What was happening there?" That's when you'll find out whether or not it was a jhāna. If while meditating the thought "Is this jhāna?" arises, then it cannot be jhāna! Thoughts like that can't come up within these deep states of stillness. Only afterward, when you review those states, can you look back and say, "Ah, that was a jhāna."

If you get into any difficulty in your meditation, stop and ask yourself, “Which of the hindrances is this?” Find out what the cause is. Once you know the cause, then you can remember the solution and apply it. If it’s sensory desire, just take the attention away from the five senses little by little and apply it to the breath or the mind. If it’s ill will, do some loving-kindness. For sloth and torpor, remember “give value to awareness.” If it’s restlessness and remorse, remember “contentment, contentment, contentment” or practice forgiveness. And if it’s doubt, be confident and be inspired by the teachings. Whenever you meditate, apply the solutions methodically. That way, the obstacles you experience won’t create long-term barriers. They’re things that you can recognize, overcome, and move beyond.

The Workshop of the Hindrances

Having discussed the five hindrances separately, I will now point out that they all emanate from a single source. They are generated by the control freak inside of you that refuses to let things go.

Meditators fail to overcome the hindrances because they look for them in the wrong place. It is crucial to success in meditation to understand that the hindrances are to be seen at work in the space between the knower and the known. The hindrances' source is the doer, their result is lack of progress, but their workshop is the space between the mind and its meditation object. Essentially, the five hindrances are a relationship problem.

Skillful meditators observing their breath also pay attention to *how* they watch their breath. If you see expectation between you and your breath, then you are watching the breath with desire, part of the first hindrance. If you notice aggression in the space in between, then you are watching the breath with the second hindrance, ill will. Or if you recognize fear in that space, maybe anxiety about losing awareness of the breath, then you are meditating with a combination of hindrances. For a time you may appear to be successful, able to keep the breath in mind for several minutes, but you will find that you are blocked from going deeper. You have been watching the wrong thing. Your main task in meditation is to notice these hindrances and knock them out. Thereby you earn each successive stage in meditation, rather than trying to steal the prize of each stage by an act of will.

In every stage of this meditation you cannot go wrong when you put peace or kindness in the space between you and whatever you are aware of. When a sexual fantasy is occurring, put peace in the space and the daydream will soon run out of fuel. Make peace not war with the dullness. Place kindness between the observer and your aching body. And agree to a ceasefire in the battle between you and your wandering mind. Stop controlling and start to let go.

Just as a house is built of thousands of bricks laid one by one, so the house of peace (i.e., jhāna) is built of thousands of moments of peace made one by one. When moment after moment you place peace or gentleness or kindness in the space between, then the sexual fantasies are no longer needed, pain fades away, dullness turns to brightness, restlessness runs out of gas, and jhāna simply happens.

In summary, notice that the five hindrances occur in the space between the observer and the observed. So place peace and loving-kindness in that space. Don't just be mindful, but develop what I call *unconditional mindfulness,* the awareness that never controls or even interferes with whatever it knows. Then all the hindrances will be undermined and soon fade.

The Simile of the Snake

Many meditators complain of a pet hindrance, a problem in meditation that blocks them again and again. Recurring hindrances can be overcome using a method derived from the following simile of the snake.

In my early years as a forest monk in Thailand, I would often return to my hut late at night barefoot because there weren't any sandals, and I would use the light of the stars to guide me because there were no batteries for my flashlight. Though the jungle paths were shared with many snakes, I never got bitten. I knew they were there in great numbers and that they were very dangerous, so I walked very carefully on the lookout for them. If I saw a suspicious dark band on the path, though it could have been a stick, I would leap over it or else go by another route. Thus I successfully avoided the danger.

In the same way, on the path of meditation there are many dangerous hindrances waiting to grab you and disable your progress. If you would only remember that they are prowling and that they are dangerous, then you would be on the lookout for them and never get caught.

Your pet hindrance is like the most abundant species of snake, one that has caught you many times already. So at the beginning of each sitting remind yourself of that pet hindrance. Alert yourself to its danger. Then you will be on the lookout for it, in the space between the knower and the known, throughout your meditation sitting. Using this method you'll rarely get caught.

The Nālāgiri Strategy

Some meditators claim to experience all the five hindrances at once and in great force! At the time they think they might go crazy. To help such meditators with their acute and intense attack of all hindrances, I teach the Nālāgiri Strategy based on a well-known episode from the life of the Buddha.

Enemies tried to kill the Buddha by releasing an intoxicated bull elephant named Nālāgiri in the narrow street where the Buddha was walking for alms. Those who saw the mad elephant charging shouted warnings to the Buddha and his following of monks to quickly get out of the way. All the monks fled except for the Buddha and his faithful attendant Ven. Ānanda. Ānanda bravely moved in front of his master, ready to protect his beloved teacher by sacrificing his own life. Gently the Buddha pushed Ven. Ānanda to the side and faced the immensely powerful charging elephant alone. The Buddha certainly possessed psychic powers, and I believe he could have grabbed the great elephant by the trunk, twirled him three times in the air above his head, and thrown him over the river Ganges hundreds of miles away! But that is not the way of a buddha. Instead he used loving-kindness/letting go. Perhaps the Buddha thought something like "Dear Nālāgiri, the door of my heart is open to you no matter what you ever do to me. You may swat me with your trunk or crush me under your feet, but I will give you no ill will. I will love you unconditionally." The Buddha gently placed peace in the space between him and the dangerous elephant. Such is the irresistible power of authentic loving-kindness/letting go that in a few seconds the elephant's rage had subsided, and Nālāgiri was meekly bowing before the Compassionate One, having his trunk gently stroked "There Nālāgiri, there…"

There are times in some meditators' practice when their mind is as crazy as an intoxicated bull elephant charging around smashing everything. In such situations please remember the Nālāgiri Strategy. Don't use force to subdue your raging bull elephant of a mind. Instead use loving-kindness/letting go: "Dear crazy mind of mine, the door of my heart is fully open to you no matter what you ever do to me. You may destroy or crush me, but I will give you no ill will. I love you, my mind, no matter what you ever do." Make peace with your crazy mind instead of fighting it. Such is the power of authentic loving-kindness/letting go that in a surprisingly short time, the mind will be released from its rage and stand meekly before you as your soft mindfulness gently strokes it "There mind, there…"

When the Hindrances Are Knocked Out

The question often arises as to how long the hindrances remain knocked out. When they are overcome, does that mean forever or just during your meditation?

At first, you overcome them temporarily. When you emerge from a deep meditation, you'll notice that those hindrances have been gone for a long time. The mind is very sharp, very still. You can keep your attention on one thing for a long time, and you have no ill will at all. You can't get angry with someone even if they hit you over the head. You aren't interested in sensory pleasures like sex. This is the result of good meditation. But after a while, depending on the depth and the length of that meditation, the hindrances come back again. It's like they're in the boxing ring and they've just been knocked out. They are "unconscious" for a while. Eventually they come round again and start playing their tricks. But at least you know what it is like to have overcome those hindrances. The more you return to those deep stages—the more often the hindrances get knocked out—the more sickly and weak they become. Then it's the job of the enlightenment insights to overcome those weakened hindrances once and for all. This is the age-old path of Buddhism. You knock out the five hindrances through meditation practice in order to provide an opportunity for wisdom. Wisdom will then see through these weakened hindrances and destroy them. *When the hindrances have been completely abandoned, you're enlightened.* And if you are enlightened, there is no difficulty in getting into jhānas because the obstacles are gone. What was between you and jhānas has been completely eradicated.

5

The Quality of Mindfulness

MINDFULNESS is one of the spiritual faculties *(indriya)* that create success in meditation. If it’s not fully understood and fully practiced, you can waste a lot of time in your meditation.

Setting Up the Gatekeeper

Mindfulness is not just being aware, being awake, or being fully conscious of what's occurring around you. Mindfulness also guides the awareness to specific areas, remembers the instructions, and initiates a response. In a simile the Buddha used, mindfulness is like a person who guards a door or gate (AN VII,63).

Imagine that you are a wealthy person with a gatekeeper guarding your mansion. One evening, before going to the temple to practice meditation, you tell the gatekeeper to be mindful of burglars. When you return home, your loving-kindness suddenly vanishes when you find your house has been burgled. "Didn't I tell you to be mindful!" you scream at the gatekeeper. "But I was mindful," pleads the gatekeeper. "I gave attention to the burglars as they broke in, and I was clearly attentive as they walked out with your plasma-screen TV and state-of-the-art sound system. I mindfully watched them go in several times, and my mind did not wander as I observed them take all your antique furniture and priceless jewelry."

Would you be happy with such an explanation of mindfulness? A wise gatekeeper knows that mindfulness is more than bare attention. A wise gatekeeper has to remember the instructions and perform them with diligence. If he sees a thief trying to break in, then he must stop the burglar or else call in the police.

In the same way, a wise meditator must do more than just give bare attention to whatever comes into and goes out of the mind. The wise meditator must remember the instructions and act on them with diligence. For instance, the Buddha gave an instruction about "right effort," the sixth factor of the noble eightfold path. When wise meditators practicing mindfulness observe an unwholesome state trying to break in, they try to stop the defilement. And if the unwholesome state does slip in, they try to evict it. Unwholesome states such as sexual desire or anger are like burglars or sweet-talking con artists, who will rob you of your peace, wisdom, and happiness. There are, then, these two aspects of mindfulness: awareness and remembering the instructions.

In the Buddhist suttas, the same Pāli word *sati* is used for both awareness and memory. A person who has good mindfulness is also a person who has a good memory. If we pay full attention to what we are doing, this awareness creates an imprint in our mind. It becomes easy to remember. For example, suppose you come very close to having a serious car accident. Because of the danger, your mindfulness suddenly becomes extremely sharp. And because of the intensity of that mindfulness, you remember the event very clearly. When you go to sleep that night you might not be able to forget it. This shows the connection between awareness and memory. The more you are paying attention to what you're doing, the better you remember it. Again, these two things go together, awareness and memory.

If we have gatekeepers who have developed awareness, they will pay attention to the instructions that they are given. If they give full attention to the instructions, they will be able to remember them and act on them diligently. So we should give ourselves clear instructions paying full attention; then we will remember what we are supposed to be doing. The teacher's job is also to give clear instructions to help us in guiding the mind. When the training in meditation is methodical and each stage is well defined, then our gatekeepers have the clarity they need.

Instructing the Gatekeeper

At the beginning of the meditation, please remember that there's a gatekeeper inside—something that can be aware of what's happening and remember instructions. Tell that gatekeeper something like "Now is the time to be aware of the present moment." Tell the gatekeeper this three times. If you repeat something, you're more likely to remember it. Maybe when you were at school and couldn't spell a word, you had to write it out a hundred times. You never forget it after that, because when you repeat something it takes more effort, and mindfulness becomes stronger. What's easy to do doesn't require much mindfulness. So make it difficult for yourself by repeating instructions: "I will be aware of the present moment. I will be aware of the present moment. I will be aware of the present moment."

With the gatekeeper, like any other servant or worker, you don't have to keep giving the same instruction every second or two. Just give that instruction to the gatekeeper three times at the beginning, then let the gatekeeper get on with the task. Trust the gatekeeper to know its job.

Instruct your gatekeeper as you would instruct a taxi driver. You just say clearly where you want to go, then you can sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride. You trust that the driver knows how to get there. But imagine what would happen if you kept telling the driver every few seconds,"Go slower…go faster…turn left here…now go into third gear…look in your mirror…keep to the right." After driving a few hundred yards the taxi driver would throw you out. No wonder then, when meditators keep giving instructions to their gatekeeper every few seconds, their minds rebel and refuse to cooperate.

Let the mind get on with the job of being in the present moment. Don't keep interfering with it. Give the mind clear instructions and then let go and watch. If you establish mindfulness in this way, you will find that your mind will do what it's told. It will still make mistakes now and again, but the instructions that you've given will ensure that as soon as it starts to wander off into the past or the future, mindfulness will remember to return to the present moment. For you, the onlooker, it's something that happens automatically.You just watch the gatekeeper do the work without giving any more instructions. This is knowing the mind and working with its nature.

I encourage you to play games with the mind to learn its capabilities. I was told on my first meditation retreat that there is no need to set the alarm for getting up in the morning. The teacher told us instead to say to ourselves before going to bed,"I'm going to get up at five minutes to five." It worked every morning. I didn't need to keep looking at my clock to check if it was five to five yet, and when I woke up and looked at my clock it was five minutes to five, give or take a minute or two. It's amazing how the mind works. I don't know how it remembered, but it did. So try programming your mind: "Now is the time to watch the present moment. Be in the present moment. Be in the present moment." That's all you need to do. Then you can let the mind do the work.

It's also important to clearly instruct the gatekeeper who is allowed in and who is not. It's not enough just to have the guest list. If the gatekeeper hasn't got a list of who's forbidden, it could easily make mistakes.

The Gatekeeper at Stage One

In the first of these meditation stages, present-moment awareness, the guest list—who's allowed in—is anything happening now. It can be the sound of a bird. It can be the sound of a truck in the distance. It can be the wind. It can be someone coughing or banging the door. It doesn't matter. If it is something happening now, then it is a guest of present-moment awareness. It can be the breath. It can be a nimitta. It can be a jhāna. That's all part of the present moment. So be very clear on who is allowed in, and welcome your guests.

You should also be very clear on what's not allowed in. Who are the gatecrashers to present-moment awareness? Those enemies are any thought, any perception, any view of the past or the future. That is, any looking back or any looking forward. It's important to know those gatecrashers and to articulate them clearly when you instruct your gatekeeper. Say to yourself three times at the start of your meditation, "I'll be aware of the present moment, and I'll not go off into the past or the future." Instructing the gatekeeper about the dangers as well as the goals, helps mindfulness do its task. When a gatecrasher appears, mindfulness knows, "This is not what I'm supposed to be doing." Mindfulness then discards that thought or perception of the past or the future.

The Gatekeeper at Stage Two

In the second stage of silent present-moment awareness, the goal is silence, and the gatecrasher is inner speech. So you tell the mind very clearly at the beginning of that stage: "I'll be silently aware in the present moment and will discard all inner speech." Repeat this two more times. That way you establish mindfulness. You give your meditation the possibility of success because you've instructed your gatekeeper clearly.

The Gatekeeper at Stage Three

In the third stage, silent present-moment awareness of the breath, the only invited guest is the breath in the present moment. Who are the gatecrashers? They are everything other than the breath, which includes sounds outside, feelings in the body, or thoughts about lunch or dinner or whatever. Everything other than the breath is a gatecrasher. So you should tell yourself three times:"I will be aware of the breath in the present moment and discard all other perceptions and thoughts." Once again, having told the mind very clearly both what it is supposed to do and not do, you can let the mind get on with its work. You just look on. When a thought other than the breath comes up, such as hearing the sound of a lawnmower outside, the mind knows immediately that it's not supposed to be doing this and it turns away automatically. This is training the mind in mindfulness. It's fascinating to watch the mind when it is well trained. When it has been given clear instructions, it remembers what to do, it knows what it's doing, and the meditation becomes smooth and appears effortless.

The meditation, however, is not completely effortless.You're putting in some effort but at the right time, when it's going to be effective. It's like growing a tree. There are times when you put effort in and times when you let things be.You plant the seed, you water it, and you fertilize it. But most of the time, when you're growing a tree, your job is just to guard it, to make sure that nothing interferes with the process. The seed has its instructions; it just needs the chance. In the same way, don't keep interfering with the mind. Don't keep prodding it and pushing it and telling it to do things, because otherwise after a while it will just rebel. "Leave me alone. Look, I'm trying to do my job. Get out of the way," says the mind. And if you don't leave the mind alone quickly, your meditation is shot!

The Gatekeeper at Stage Four

In the fourth stage of the meditation—full sustained attention on the breath—the gatekeeper is told to be aware of the whole breath in every moment and not allow other things to intrude on this smooth, continuous awareness:“I shall be aware of the whole breath continually, and disregard anything other than the breath.” By instructing the gatekeeper very carefully and clearly, you give mindfulness a chance to succeed. You only have to tell yourself the message three times at the beginning of the stage and just see what happens.

If you give yourself these instructions and after one or two minutes you find you’re drifting off focus, there are two possible reasons. Either you didn’t instruct yourself carefully enough or you have very weak mindfulness. If you have weak mindfulness, then every three or four minutes you should repeat the instructions. There’s no need to repeat the instructions every ten or fifteen seconds. Repeating the instructions too often causes a disturbance in meditation, which never gives meditation a chance to succeed and instead gives rise to restlessness and despair.

If you give yourself the instructions very carefully, you’ll remember them. Stage by stage, your mindfulness will deepen. You will notice that mindfulness begins with a large territory in which to roam—the present moment. Then the range allowed to mindfulness is gradually reduced. Mindfulness focuses on what is silent in the present moment, discarding all that belongs to inner speech. Then instead of just silence in the present moment, everything is discarded other than the silent awareness of the breath in the present moment. Then everything is discarded other than the full awareness of the breath, from the very beginning of the in-breath to the end of the in-breath, from the very beginning of the out-breath to the end of the out-breath. In each successive stage mindfulness reduces its spread to gain more power.

Samādhi—Attentive Stillness

In stage three, awareness of the breath, you just have to notice part of each in-breath and part of each out-breath. Once you've noticed part of the in-breath, then the mind can go wandering off somewhere else, but it has to be "home" again in time to catch the next out-breath. Once it's seen the breath going out, then it can go off and observe other things, until it has to come home again to catch the breath going in. Mindfulness still has other places where it can go. It is tied to the breath, but on a long leash. But in stage four, full awareness of the breath, you need to completely lock the awareness into the breathing and go nowhere else. This fourth stage is so important in meditation because here you fully grab hold of your meditation object for the first time. Mindfulness is confined to one small area of existence—your momentary breath. You are focusing your awareness instead of allowing it to go all over the place. When mindfulness is focused it becomes strong. It's like using a magnifying glass to start a fire—you're concentrating all the energy on one thing. This attentive stillness that is able to sustain awareness on one thing is called *samādhi*. No need to call it "concentration," because concentration misses so much of what is really important in the meaning of samādhi.

Samādhi is the attentive stillness that is able to sustain attention on one thing, and it is not uncommon. Take, for example, a surgeon performing an operation. Surgeons tell me that sometimes they spend many hours on one operation. They're on their feet throughout, but they never feel tired because they have to sustain their attention on the end of the scalpel. Just one little mistake, one lapse of attentive stillness, and their patient can die. Surgeons performing operations develop a type of samādhi. They don't feel any pain in their legs, because all their attention is on the end of the knife. Surgeons attain this level of samādhi because they have to. There's only one thing in the world that they're concerned with—just this part of the operation that is happening now. This example tells us an important message about samādhi: *if it's really important, you can do it.*

Arousing Energy

Another factor needed for mindfulness is energy. You need energy at each stage, and that energy is aroused by putting everything you have into what you're doing. Don't keep anything back for the next moment. One of the mistakes that people make—especially with mental energy—is thinking, "If I put a lot of energy into this moment, I'll have nothing left for the next moment." It doesn't work that way with the mind. The more energy you put into this moment, the more you have for the next.

There is a limitless store of mental energy, and if you put a lot of energy into what you are doing right now, you'll find that in the next moment, the next five minutes, or the next hour you're really awake and alert. That's why Ajahn Chah, my teacher, used to say that whatever you're doing, put all your mind into it. Then you will build up energy. If, however, you think, "Oh, I don't really need to put energy into this moment," then you will become dull and won't enjoy anything in life.

When eating, put energy into every mindful mouthful. See how much you can notice. Then you'll enjoy it more! The gatecrasher to mindfulness when you are eating is thinking about something else. Sometimes you don't even know what you are putting into your mouth. No wonder so many people suffer from indigestion! Whatever it is that you are doing, know what you are doing, and energy will be aroused.

Turning Up the Lights

As you build up mindfulness and it gets sharper, you will realize that you are emerging from a world that has been very dim. As you get more and more mindful, it's as if someone has turned on the lights in the room, or the sun has come out, illuminating the surroundings. You see so much more of what's around you. It's like shining a spotlight on reality, and you begin to see the subtle beauty of rich colors, delightful shapes, and deep textures. It all appears very beautiful and wonderful. When mindfulness becomes powerful, it generates not only insight but also bliss.

When you have developed powerful mindfulness, it's like going out into a beautiful garden in the brilliant sunshine. It's energizing and inspiring. Possessing strong mindfulness, such brightness of mind, if you then focus it on a small part of the world, then you will see so deeply into its nature. The experience of bright and focused awareness is wonderful and amazing! You see much more beauty and truth than you ever imagined.

So developing mindfulness is like turning up the lights of the mind. When you sustain mindfulness on one thing instead of letting it wander all over the place, mindfulness builds up its own energy. You begin to see into things very deeply and wonderfully.

Building Up the Muscles of Insight

Empowering mindfulness builds up the muscles of insight. Just take any object such as a leaf on a bush and sustain your attention on that one leaf. Let mindfulness become still until you see not just a green leaf but a whole world. Then you'll understand the power of mindfulness. When you can sustain mindfulness on one thing, you will know how it illuminates and reveals the beauty in that object. It becomes fascinating just how much you can see, how much detail and color and texture there is in a tiny leaf! This is where mindfulness playfully engages with its object, seeing ever new insights into its nature. But if you start wondering about what you're going to have for dinner, you stop seeing deeply into the leaf. Or if you start getting dull, or if you start worrying, "Are people looking at me? Do they think I'm a bit strange?"—then the spell of sustained attention will break. If you can sustain your attention on one thing, however, you'll be amazed by what you see.

If you develop attentive stillness, the ability to sustain mindfulness on one thing for long periods of time, then you will gain the ability to delve into something with insight and to see deeply into its nature. If you want to discover for yourself the deep truths of existence, not taking it on faith from the books or from teachers, then this is how you find out. This is how to achieve enlightenment experiences. You develop powerful mindfulness and point it at some interesting and rich source of wisdom—especially at the mind. If you can sustain attention on your mind and dive into it, you will find a treasure chest of priceless jewels that we call deep insight.

To summarize so far, this is the way of mindfulness: what it actually is, how to develop it and, in particular, how to set up mindfulness at every stage of your meditation. Give your gatekeeper clear instructions so that mindfulness knows what to do. Then sit back and watch this mind do its job. That's all you need to do.

The Different Levels of Mindfulness Revisited

One of the marvelous things about meditation is that as you develop your mindfulness, you discover it has different levels.You realize that your normal mindfulness is too dull and useless for wisdom; it has very little sharpness or power at all. When you make progress in meditation, your mindfulness gets sharper and more powerful. By this I mean that you can sustain attention on very fine areas, and the mindfulness is very bright. And as you deepen the meditation, mindfulness becomes ever more powerful, agile, and sharp.

Sometimes it happens that meditators lose the object of awareness. If the breath is your object, you lose the breath. What has happened is that the breath has become fine and subtle, but the mindfulness is still too coarse. It hasn't been able to keep up with the development of the breath. When that happens, you should go back to the previous stage. This can occur at any time, but especially within full sustained attention on the breath at stage four.

Sometimes the breath disappears and a nimitta can come up, but you can't sustain that nimitta. This is because the quality of mindfulness necessary to sustain a nimitta must be very refined, and you haven't yet built up that level of power. So you must return to the stage before the nimitta comes up. Go back to full awareness of the beautiful breath, which is a coarser object than the nimitta, and let mindfulness develop its strength on that. When your mindfulness is fully developed at the fifth stage, it has the power to handle the more refined nimitta. You will find as mindfulness becomes sharper and more powerful, it can sustain attention even on the most subtle of objects. But first you have to learn how to sustain attention on the coarser meditation objects. At each of these successive stages the mindfulness has a higher quality to it, far more agile and sharp than at the previous stage. The mindfulness required to hold a nimitta is like the skill required of a surgeon operating on the brain, while the mindfulness required to hold the breath at stage three is like the skill required for peeling potatoes.You need quite a different refinement at the subtle level. If you move straight from peeling potatoes into being a brain surgeon, you're going to make a mess. The same applies if you move too quickly from the breath to the nimitta. You're going to lose it.

With development, you can experience immovable mindfulness, the mindfulness that is on one thing entirely—very clear, very sharp. The Buddha said this reaches its peak in the fourth jhāna. That's the pinnacle of mindfulness, where you experience complete equanimity. You're just fully aware and unmoving. That's as powerful as mindfulness can get. Once you have experienced that level of mindfulness, then you will know for yourself how ridiculous it is to think you can become enlightened without jhāna.

Without such powerful mindfulness, you will be unable to achieve powerful insights. So you begin to realize from your own experience what mindfulness can be and the level of mindfulness you need to become enlightened.

As you see, mindfulness in daily life is one thing and mindfulness in deep meditation something else. Mindfulness has different degrees of power, subtlety, and penetration. Just as there are many types of knives—blunt ones and sharp ones, potato peelers and scalpels—so it is with mindfulness.

So develop a sharp and powerful mindfulness that you can use to dig deeply into the nature of your mind and uncover the beautiful treasures of impermanence *(anicca),* suffering *(dukkha),* and no-self *(anattā)*. When I say that these are beautiful treasures, some people object: How can suffering be a treasure? How can impermanence and no-self be treasures? Such people want something seemingly marvelous and uplifting like beauty, transcendence, cosmic consciousness, or the essence of all being. But that's why they can't find the real treasures. They don't know what they're looking for.

6

Using Variety to Freshen Up Our Meditation

IN THIS CHAPTER I will present three different types of meditation: loving-kindness, letting be, and walking meditation. In these three meditations the method is mostly the same as in breath meditation, the main difference being where you focus your attention. You will find these methods helpful because they will add variety to your meditation practice. If you keep plugging away at only one type of meditation, you might become so bored that you drift off into dullness or you might lose all interest and give up altogether. You need happiness in your meditation practice, not only as the glue that fixes mindfulness onto its object, but also as the entertainment factor that will keep you returning to meditate. The motto of physical fitness might be “no pain—no gain,” but the motto of meditation is “no joy—no mindfulness.”

Loving-Kindness Meditation

The Buddha's word for loving-kindness is *mettā*. It refers to an emotion, to that feeling of goodwill that can sustain thoughts wishing happiness for another, and that is willing to forgive any fault. My favorite expression of mettā is encompassed by the words "the door of my heart is fully open to you, forever, whoever you are and whatever you have done." Mettā is love without a self, arising from inspiration, expecting nothing back in return, and without any conditions. The Buddha compared mettā to a mother's love for her child (Sn 149). A mother might not always like her child or agree with everything it does, but she will always care for her child and wish it only happiness. Such an open-hearted, non-discriminating, and liberating kindness is mettā.

In mettā meditation you focus your attention on the feeling of loving-kindness, developing that delightful emotion until it fills the whole mind. The way this is achieved can be compared to the way you light a campfire. You start with paper or anything else that is easy to light. Then you add kindling, small twigs, or strips of wood. When the kindling is on fire you add thicker pieces of wood, and after a time the thick logs. Once the fire is roaring and very hot, you can even put on wet and sappy logs and they are soon alight.

Mettā can accurately be compared with a warm and radiant fire burning in your heart. You cannot expect to light the fire of loving-kindness by starting with a difficult object, no more than you can expect to light a campfire by striking a match under a thick log. So do not begin mettā meditation by spreading mettā to yourself or to an enemy. Instead begin by spreading loving-kindness to something that is easy to ignite with loving-kindness.

I prepare myself for mettā meditation by grounding my mindfulness in the present moment, establishing stage one of the meditation method described in chapter 1. Then I initiate mettā meditation by imagining a little kitten. I like cats, especially kittens, so my imaginary kitten is to loving-kindness as gas is to a flame. I only need to think of my little kitten and my heart lights up with mettā. I continue to visualize my imaginary friend, picturing it as abandoned, hungry, and very afraid. In its short span of life it has only known rejection, violence, and loneliness. I imagine its bones sticking out from its emaciated body, its fur soiled with grime and some blood, and its body rigid with terror. I consider that if I don't care for this vulnerable little being then no one will, and it will die such a horrible, lonely, terrified death. I feel that kitten's pain fully, in all its forms, and my heart opens up releasing a flood of compassion. I will care for that little kitten. I will protect it and feed it. I imagine myself looking deeply into its anxious eyes, trying to melt its apprehension with the mettā flowing through my own eyes. I reach out to it slowly, reassuringly, never losing eye contact. Gently, I pick up that little kitten and bring it to my chest. I remove the kitten's cold with the warmth from my own body, I take away its fear with the softness of my embrace, and I feel the kitten's trust grow. I speak to the kitten on my chest: "Little being, never feel alone again. Never feel so afraid. I will always look after you, be your protector and friend. I love you, little kitten. Wherever you go, whatever you do, my heart will always welcome you. I give you my limitless loving-kindness always." I feel my kitten become warm, relax, and finally purr.

This is but an outline of how I begin my meditation on mettā. I usually take much more time. I use my imagination and inner commentary (inner speech) to paint a picture in my mind, to create a scenario where the first flames of mettā can arise. At the end of the mental exercise, my eyes still closed, I focus the attention on the region around my heart and feel the first warm glow of the emotion of loving-kindness.

My kitten is like the paper that you use to start the campfire. You may not like kittens, so choose something else, a puppy or a baby perhaps. Whatever you choose as your first object of mettā, make it an imaginary being and not a real one. In your mind you can make a kitten or a puppy or a baby into anything you like. You have more freedom to generate mettā when you make use of a fantasy creature rather than one from the real world. My imaginary kitten purrs at the right time and never poops in my lap. Having chosen your first object, use your powers of imagination to create a story around that being that arouses your loving-kindness. With practice this innovative method becomes one of the most successful and enjoyable ways to begin mettā meditation.

Some years ago a female student complained to me that this method did not work for her. She regarded small animals, especially mischievous kittens, as little pests, nor did she like crying-and-wailing nappy-soiling babies. She had a severe case of what I now call "mettā-block." She went on to tell me that in her apartment in Sydney she had been growing some flowers in pots. So I suggested that she choose one of her plants as her first object of mettā. She imagined a seedling so delicate and tender. It was so fragile that it needed all her care, love, and protection to survive. She directed all her motherly instincts to that vulnerable little potted plant, nurturing and feeding her friend until it burst from its bud to repay her kindness with a beautiful, fragrant flower. She really took to that method. That was the first time mettā meditation worked for her. During the retreat when this happened, she said it was the only session when she wasn't waiting for me to ring the bell.

After the first flames of mettā have been established in this way, let go of your imaginary creature and put in its place a real person, someone very close to you emotionally such as your partner, a well-loved relation, or even your very best friend. It must be someone for whom it is easy to generate and sustain loving-kindness. In the metaphor of the campfire, they will be the thin pieces of wood called kindling. Once again use your inner speech to paint a picture around them in your mind. They too need your friendship and love. They are also emotionally vulnerable, subject to the disappointments and frustrations of life. Using you inner commentary say: "Dearest friend, I sincerely wish you happiness. May your body be free from pain and your mind find contentment. I give you my love with no conditions. I'll always be there for you.You will always have a place in my heart. I truly care for you"—or similar words of your own design. Use whatever phrases arouse the warm glow of mettā in your heart. Stay with this person. Imagine they are right before you until the mettā grows bright and constant around them. Now briefly place your attention on your body near your heart and feel the physical sensation associated with mettā. You will find it feels delightful.

Let go of the image of that person and substitute that of another close acquaintance, creating the feeling of mettā around them by using your inner speech in the same way:"May you live in happiness…" Imagine them right before you until the mettā glows bright and constant around them.

Next substitute an entire group of people, perhaps all the people who live in your house. Develop the caring glow of mettā around them in the same way:"May you be well and happy…" In the simile of the campfire, you are now putting on the logs.

See if you can imagine mettā to be a golden radiance emanating from a beautiful white lotus flower in the middle of your heart. Allow that radiance of loving-kindness to expand in all directions, embracing more and more living beings until it becomes boundless, filling up all that you can imagine. "May all living beings, near or far, great or small, be happy and at peace…" Bathe the whole universe in the warmth of the golden light of loving-kindness. Stay there for a while.

In the simile of the campfire, the fire is now roaring and very hot and can now burn the wet and sappy logs. Think about your enemy. Visualize someone who has hurt you badly. You will be astonished that your mettā is now strong enough for you to forgive them. You are now able to share the healing golden glow of loving-kindness with them as well: "Friend, whatever you have done to me, revenge will not help either of us, so instead I wish you well. I sincerely wish you freedom from the pain of the past and joy in all your future. May the beauty of this unconditional loving-kindness reach you as well, bringing you happiness and contentment." When the fire of mettā burns strong, nothing can withstand it. Next, there is one final "wet and sappy stick" to be tossed into the fire of mettā. Most meditators find that the hardest person to give loving-kindness to…is themselves.

Imagine that you are looking at yourself in a mirror. Say with your inner speech and with total sincerity: "I wish myself well. I now give myself the gift of happiness. Too long the door of my heart has been closed to me; now I open it. No matter what I have done, or will ever do, the door to my own love and respect is always open to me. I forgive myself unreservedly. Come home. I now give myself the love that does not judge. I care for this vulnerable being called 'me.' I embrace all of me with the loving-kindness of mettā." Invent your own words here to let the warmth of loving-kindness sink deep inside of you, to the part that is most frightened. Let it melt all resistance until you are at one with mettā, unlimited loving-kindness, like a mother's care for her child.

Before you end the mettā meditation, pause for a minute or two and reflect on how you feel inside. Notice the effect that this meditation has had on you. Mettā meditation can produce heavenly bliss.

To bring the meditation to an elegant conclusion, once more imagine mettā as a golden glow radiating from the beautiful white lotus located in your heart. Visualize the golden radiance being drawn back into the lotus, leaving the warmth outside. When the golden glow becomes like a condensed ball of incandescent energy in the center of the white lotus, imagine the petals closing around the ball of mettā, guarding the seed of loving-kindness within your heart, ready to be released again in your next mettā meditation. Open your eyes and get up slowly.

A Softening of the Mind

Mettā meditation softens the mind and turns it toward care, goodwill, and acceptance. You become more selfless, less concerned with your own needs and more willing to peacefully interact with others. The emotion that is mettā feels delightful and pure. As you develop it repeatedly, it soon remains constant in your heart. You become a compassionate person, and your kindness is a source of joy to all beings and to yourself.

Mettā enables you to embrace another being just as they are. Most people find this impossible because of their faultfinding mind. They only see part of the whole, the part that is flawed, and refuse to accept it. Loving-kindness, on the other hand, embraces the wholeness of something and accepts it as it is. Through the practice of mettā meditation, you find yourself becoming less conscious of the faults in yourself and other beings, and more able to embrace them just the way they are. This ability to see the beauty in an object and ignore its flaws is a powerful aid to all types of meditation. To sustain your attention in the present moment, for example, you must accept the way things are now, embracing this moment and not being critical. When you persist in finding faults in the present moment, you will find you cannot remain there.

It is possible to combine mettā meditation with breath meditation. When you begin stage three, awareness of the breath, you observe your breath with loving-kindness. You think something like “breath, the door of my heart is open to you no matter how you feel, no matter what you do.” You will soon be looking at your breathing with compassion, embracing it as it is instead of finding fault. By adding mettā to the process of awareness, you have no expectations, since the breath seems more than good enough. Because of loving-kindness, you soon feel this attractive warmth toward the breath that brings joy to every in-breath and out-breath. It becomes so nice to watch your breath that in a very short time you have reached stage five, the beautiful breath.

Taking Mettā into Jhāna

Jhānas are emotional summits and not intellectual heights. You cannot think your way into a jhāna, you can only feel your way in. To succeed you require familiarity with your emotional world, enough to trust in it silently without any controlling. Perhaps this is why female meditators seem to enter jhāna more easily than males. Mettā meditation trains everyone to become more at ease with the power of emotions. Sometimes you may cry during mettā meditation, even weep uncontrollably. If so, let it come. On the path to nibbāna we all have to learn to embrace the intensity of the purest emotions, and the jhānas are the purest of all. Therefore mettā meditation makes jhāna more accessible.

You can even take mettā meditation directly into jhāna. When you have reached the stage described above where you are radiating this limitless golden glow of loving-kindness throughout the whole universe, drenching every sentient being with the immense power of your boundless love, then take the next step. Forget about all beings and ignore where the power is coming from. Focus your attention instead on the experience of mettā in itself. This step often happens automatically with no decision coming from you. The meditation object is being simplified, freed from the perception of separate beings. All that remains in your mind is what I call disembodied mettā, similar to the disembodied grin of the Cheshire Cat in the simile in chapter 2. You experience this as a blissful sphere of gorgeous golden light in your mind's eye. It is a nimitta. It's the mettā nimitta.

A nimitta that is generated through mettā meditation is always incredibly beautiful, only sometimes it isn't so stable. Excitement is the usual problem. However, its nature is so alluring that you cannot resist hanging out with such intense bliss. Thus, in a short time the brilliant golden mettā nimitta becomes still and you fall into jhāna. This is how mettā meditation takes you into jhāna.

Spreading Mettā after Deep Samādhi

Many years ago in my monastery in Perth, we were chanting the Buddha's verses for spreading loving-kindness. The chant lasts only five minutes. I had been meditating deeply beforehand, and when we began chanting my mind engaged with mettā so completely that I was unable to continue with the chanting. Boundless mettā was pouring out of me in a torrent in all directions, and I became happily immersed there. I never did complete those verses. My mind had been made so soft and pliant by my earlier meditations that the Buddha's original words on how to spread loving-kindness triggered an irrepressible outpouring of mettā.

Experiences such as this taught me that you should first train your mind in samādhi, attentive stillness, and then you can spread loving-kindness so powerfully. After establishing samādhi you can *zap* anyone anywhere with superpower mettā! At the end of the meditation retreats that I lead, I invite my students to try this out. Many of my students have powerful minds at the conclusion of a retreat. I lead them in a mettā meditation, and when I feel their power is strong enough, I invite them to *zap* an absent friend with superpower mettā. I prefer them to choose someone a long distance from the retreat center. Then I look at the clock and note the time. At the end of the mettā session I inform my students of that time and suggest that they later contact that friend and inquire what they were doing then or how they were feeling. Many of my students call me on the phone in the following days to excitedly tell me:"It worked!" When you send loving-kindness from a mind empowered by samādhi, it will be received. Try it out for yourself.

Letting Be

Sometimes instead of taking loving-kindness or the breath as my object, I look at my mind and realize the best thing it needs at the moment is just to let things be. Basically, letting-be meditation is simply this second stage of breath meditation, just silent awareness of the present moment. It has to be silent, because to really let things be means you give no orders and have no complaints; you've got nothing to talk about. Letting be happens in the present moment. You're aware of things as they appear right now, and you allow them to come in or stay or go, whenever they want. Letting-be meditation is like sitting in a room, and whoever comes in the door, you let in. They can stay as long as they like. Even if they are terrible demons, you allow them to come in and sit down. You are not at all fazed. If the Buddha himself enters in all his glory, you just sit here just the same, completely equanimous."Come in if you want.""You can go whenever." Whatever comes into your mind, the beautiful or the gross, you stand back and let it be, with no reactions at all—quietly observing and practicing silent awareness in the present moment. This is letting-be meditation.

The Garden Simile

Many Americans have gardens in their homes where they often spend many hours working. But a garden is to be enjoyed, not just to be worked in. So I advise my students that they should frequently go sit in their own garden and enjoy its great beauty.

The least adept of my students believe that they must mow the grass, prune the bushes, water the flower bed, rake the leaves, and get the garden perfect before they can sit down to enjoy it. Of course, the garden never is perfect, no matter how hard they work. So they never get to rest.

Mediocre students, on the other hand, refrain from work. Instead they sit in their garden and begin to think.“The grass needs mowing and the bushes should be pruned. The flowers are looking dry and the leaves really need raking, and a native bush would look better over there,” and so on. They spend their time pondering how to make their garden perfect rather than simply enjoying it. They too find no peace.

The third type of student is the wise meditator. They have done a lot of work in their garden, but now is their time for rest. They say, “The lawn could be mown, the bushes could be pruned, the flowers could be watered and the leaves raked—but not now! The garden is good enough as it is.” And they can rest a while, not feeling guilty about unfinished business.

Letting-be meditation is just the same. Don’t try to make everything perfect or tie up all those loose ends before you let things be. Life is never perfect and duties are never finished. Letting be is having the courage to sit quietly and rest the mind in the midst of imperfection.

Letting Be Can Become Quite Powerful

Letting-be meditation can become quite powerful. If your breath meditation or mettā meditation or any other type of meditation isn't working, very often it's because the foundation is incorrect. So just do the letting-be meditation. You can "sit out in the garden" and just let things be. Whatever is happening, that's OK. Whatever you're experiencing is fine—no preference, no choice, no good or bad, no argument, and no commentary. Just let things be.You can have a little bit of a inner speech, but only a commentary about "letting be." Just be with what is. Just be with thoughts concerned with the meditation subject, but not about anything else. That way the meditation comes close to complete silent awareness of the present moment.

If I'm in pain, if I have a headache, stomachache, or some other ache, or if the mosquitoes are biting, I say, "Just let it be." I don't argue with it, don't get upset about it. I just watch the feelings in my body as the mosquito pushes its nose into my flesh and itching sensations follow. "Just let things be." If you're lying in bed at night and you can't go to sleep: "Let it be." Or if there's a pain that won't go away: "Just let it be." Just be with it. Don't try running away. If demons have come into your room, you're not going to push them out, but you're not going to invite them to stay either. You're just going to let them be. Letting be is the practice of equanimity.

Walking Meditation

Walking meditation is wonderful, especially in the early morning. Often when you get up early in the morning, in particular when you're not used to getting up so early, you're quite tired and the mind isn't bright. One of the advantages of walking meditation is that you can't nod off while you're walking. So if you're tired, walking meditation is very good to do. It brings up some energy, and also you can get very peaceful.

Walking meditation was both praised and practiced by the Buddha. If you read the *suttas* (teachings in the Pāli canon), you find that the Buddha would usually do walking meditation in the early morning. He wouldn't be sitting; he'd be walking.

Many monks and nuns have become enlightened on the walking meditation path. It's a very effective way of developing both calm and insight (but not to the extent of jhāna). For some monks that I know in Thailand, their main practice is walking meditation. They do very little sitting. They do a lot of walking, and many get tremendously powerful insights while they're walking.

Another benefit of walking meditation is that it is especially suitable for those who have physical discomfort when sitting for long periods. If you find it difficult to sit in meditation because of pains in the body, walking meditation can be a very effective alternative.

Don't consider walking meditation as a "second-class" meditation. If you want to spend most of your meditation time this way, please do so. But do it well and do it carefully. See if you can develop the happiness born of serenity as you're walking back and forth.

Setting Up Walking Meditation

Choose a clear, straight path between twenty to thirty paces long. This can be a corridor in a house, a path in the garden, or just a track on the grass. Use whatever is available, even if it's a bit less than twenty paces long. If it's comfortable to do so, walk without shoes, enjoying the contact of your bare feet on the ground.

Stand at one end of your path. Compose the mind. Relax the body and begin walking. Walk back and forth at a pace that seems natural to you. While you are walking, clasp your hands comfortably in front of you, and rest your gaze on the ground about two meters ahead. Be careful not to look around. If you're doing walking meditation, it's a waste of time to look here and there, because that would be distracting.

The Stages of Meditation Apply Here Too

The first four stages of meditation described in the first two chapters apply here as well. But in walking meditation attention eventually comes to rest on the feet rather than the breath.

At first, aim to develop present-moment awareness, as in stage one. Use the techniques described there to reach the state of just walking, easily, in the here and now. When you feel that you have settled into the present moment, where thoughts concerning the past and future are absent from the mind, then aim to develop silent walking in the present moment. Just as described earlier in stage two, gradually let go of all thinking. Walk without any inner speech. Make use of some of the techniques described in chapter 1 to reach this stage of silent walking.

Once the inner commentary has slowed to a bare trickle of inner speech, deliberately focus your attention on the feeling of movement in the feet and lower legs. Do so to the extent that you clearly notice every step on the path. Know every left step, know every right step—one after the other without missing any. Know every step as you turn around at the end of the path. The famous Chinese saying that the "journey of one thousand miles begins with a single step" is helpful here. Such a journey is in fact only one step long—the step that you are walking now. So just be silently aware of this "one step," and let everything else go. When you have completed ten return trips up and down the path without missing a single left or right step, then you have fulfilled stage three of the walking meditation and may proceed to the next stage.

Now increase the attention so that you notice every feeling of movement in the left step, from the very beginning when the left foot starts to move and lift up from the ground. Notice as it goes up, forward, down, and then rests on the ground again, taking the weight of the body. Develop this continuous awareness of the left step, and then similar smooth, unbroken awareness of the right step. Do this throughout every step to the end of the path. And as you turn around, notice every feeling in the turning-around procedure, not missing a movement.

When you can walk for fifteen minutes comfortably sustaining the attention on every moment of walking, without a single break, then you have reached the fourth stage of walking meditation, full sustained awareness of walking. At this point the process of walking so fully occupies the attention that the mind cannot be distracted. You know when this happens, because the mind goes into a state of samādhi, or attentive stillness, and becomes very peaceful.

Even the sound of the birds disappears as your attention is fully focused on the experience of walking. Your attention is easily settled, content, and sustained on one thing. You will find this a very pleasant experience indeed.

As your mindfulness increases, you will know more and more of the sensations of walking. Then you find that walking does have this sense of beauty and peace to it. Every step becomes a "beautiful step." And it can very easily absorb all your attention as you become fascinated by just walking. You can receive a great deal of samādhi through walking meditation in this way. That samādhi is experienced as peacefulness, a sense of stillness, a sense of the mind being very comfortable and very happy in its own corner.

I started my walking meditation practice when I was first ordained as a monk in a temple in Bangkok. I would choose a path and quite naturally, without forcing it, I'd walk very slowly. (You don't need to walk fast, and you don't need to walk slowly. Just do what feels comfortable.) I used to get into beautiful samādhi states during walking meditation. I recall once being disturbed because I'd been walking too long. I hadn't noticed the time pass, and I was needed to go to an important ceremony. One of the monks had been sent to get me. I recall this monk came up to me and said, "Brahmavamso, you've got to come to a *dāna*" (an alms offering). I was looking at a space about two meters ahead. My hands were clasped in front of me. When I heard the monk's voice, it seemed as if it came from a thousand miles away because I was so absorbed into my walking meditation. He repeated, "Brahmavamso, you have to come now!" It took me more than a minute to actually lift my gaze from the ground and to turn it around to the side where this senior monk was trying to get my attention. And as I met his eyes, all I could say was "What?" It took such a long time to get out of that samādhi and react at normal speed. The mind was so cool and so peaceful and so still.

I hope you experience this peacefulness for yourself when you try walking meditation. Many people who practice walking meditation for the first time say, "This is amazing. Beautiful." Just slowing down gives you a sense of peace. You become calm just by watching the sensations as you walk. So walking meditation is another type of meditation that I suggest you experiment with.

Choosing the Right Meditation for the Right Time

Wherever you have choice you may also find confusion. Now that you have read about several different methods of meditation, which one should you choose? The following simile will answer this question.

Apprentice carpenters begin by learning how to use their various tools until they are familiar with what each tool can do. Master carpenters who are about to make some furniture will first examine the wood they have to work with. A piece of timber straight from the lumberyard will have to be sawn to size. Then it must be planed to remove the marks from the saw. Sanding comes next, beginning with the coarsest grade of sandpaper, then a medium grade, then the finest grade of glass paper. Finally oil or wax is rubbed into the wood with a soft polishing cloth. Thus a piece of rough timber from the lumberyard is transformed by the master carpenter into a beautiful, smooth piece of furniture.

Sometimes a carpenter begins with a piece of wood that has already been planed or sanded. The master carpenter examines the wood and quickly knows that all it needs is a light sanding and then a polishing with the oil and cloth. On rare occasions, the master carpenter starts out with such a smooth piece of wood that no sanding is required, just a vigorous polishing. Such are the skills of a master carpenter.

In the same way, apprentice meditators begin by learning how to use the various methods of meditation until they are familiar with what each can do. Master meditators who are about to begin meditating will first examine the state of mind that they are to work with. If they have been very busy, they know that they will be starting out with quite a coarse mind. So they may start with a simple letting-be meditation. Perhaps they see that their body is stiff, so they choose to do some walking meditation. When they see that their mind is not so rough, they take up present-moment awareness and then silent present-moment awareness. Master meditators know from experience when their mind is able to watch the breath or ready to begin mettā meditation. They know when to apply the finer tools such as full sustained awareness of the breath or of the beautiful breath. Meditation masters become so proficient in their craft that they know the right time to turn to the nimitta and how to polish it deftly until the mind enters jhāna. Thus a coarse mind straight from the busy office is transformed by the master meditator into the most beautiful, smooth, and radiant mind.

Sometimes meditation masters begin with a mind that is already cool and mindful. They examine their state of mind and quickly know that they can bypass present-moment awareness and silence and go straight to the breath or to mettā. They may even see that their mind is so joyfully at peace that they can easily begin with awareness of the beautiful breath. On rare occasions, master meditators realize that they already possess such a poised and powerful mind that they can arouse a nimitta within a few seconds and quickly enter a jhāna. Such are the skills of a meditation master.

Foolish carpenters, in a mad rush, take a coarse piece of wood and begin rubbing it with a polishing cloth! They waste much time and destroy many fine cloths. In the same way, inept meditators, in a rush of arrogance, don't even take time to notice the coarseness of their mind and try to use mindfulness of the breathing from the very beginning. They waste much time and create many problems for themselves.

So, please become familiar with the various types of meditation until you know when and how they should be used. Then every time you meditate, begin by examining the mind you have to work with, and you will understand which meditation method to use. You will become a doctor of meditation, diagnosing accurately before treating effectively.

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The Beautiful Breath

THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHISM is in the enlightenment of the Buddha. Many centuries ago in India, the wandering monk Gautama remembered a childhood experience of the first jhāna and realized that jhāna was the way to awakening (MN 36). He went to a quiet stretch of forest on the banks of a great river, sat on a cushion of grass under a shady fig tree, and meditated. The method of meditation that he used was *ānāpāna-sati,* mindfulness of the in and out breaths. Through this practice he entered jhāna, emerged, and quickly gained the insights of enlightenment. Henceforth he was called the Buddha.

The Buddha continued to teach ānāpānasati for the remainder of his life. It was the method that had given him enlightenment, the meditation practice *par excellence,* and he imparted that same method to all his disciples both in the monastery and in the city. This foremost method of meditation is bequeathed to us today in the original Buddhist texts as part of many suttas, but in particular as the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* of the Majjhima collection (MN 118).

The Buddha described the practice of ānāpānasati as consisting of preliminary preparations followed by sixteen steps. The first twelve of those steps are instructions for entering jhāna, and the final four steps are instructions on what to do when you emerge.

The Preliminaries

A Quiet Place, a Comfortable Seat

First, the Buddha said, go to a quiet place where you will not be disturbed by people, sounds, or things like mosquitoes. Some teachers claim that you can meditate in a marketplace or in your car in busy traffic, but such superficial meditation will not lead to enlightenment. The Buddha consistently recommended that you seek out a quiet place. Tough guys might want to meditate in mosquito-ridden jungles or in the middle of tiger paths, but that is more likely to build only endurance and not the ease of jhāna. The Buddha instead praised pleasant places like orchards or parks, similar to Bodh Gaya where he gained enlightenment.

Next sit down on a comfortable seat. You may sit on a cushion, on a bench, or even on a chair as long as it isn't too comfortable. The comfort required for success in breath meditation is that level where your body can be at ease for long periods of time. Buddhists do not sit on broken glass or beds of nails. Even the Buddha used a cushion of grass under the Bodhi tree. Nor do you need to cross your legs in full lotus and hold your back ramrod straight. I know from experience that you can succeed in meditation in the most unorthodox of postures. The purpose of posture is only to free you from discomfort so that you can let go of the body as soon as possible.

The full sixteen steps of ānāpānasati are best done in a sitting position, just like the Buddha under the Bodhi tree. In walking meditation your attention should rest on the feet and not on the breath. The same goes for standing. Unenlightened meditators who try to watch their breath lying down usually fall asleep. So learn ānāpānasati in the sitting position.

Setting Up Mindfulness

You are now asked to set up mindfulness “in front of you.” When the Buddha said “in front of you” he didn’t mean putting attention on the tip of your nose, or on your upper lip, or some place in front of your eyes. To put something in front means to make it important. So this preliminary instruction is to establish mindfulness by giving it priority.

This preliminary level of mindfulness is established by following the first two stages of the basic method of meditation in chapter 1—that is, through practicing present-moment awareness and then silent present-moment awareness. From what has been said so far, it should be obvious that when your attention is wandering through the past or into the future, you are not being mindful of what’s happening right now. Also, when you are thinking or even just noting, then your attention is on the words, not on the bare experience of now. But when you are silently aware of whatever it is that is happening now (right in front of your mind), then you have established the level of mindfulness required to begin ānāpānasati.

It deserves to be said again that too many meditators go on to the breath too quickly, neglecting the preliminary instruction to establish adequate mindfulness first, and they run into trouble. Either they can’t keep the breath in mind at all or, worse, they tenaciously grasp the breath with so much willpower that they end up more stressed out than before they started. The latter type gives Buddhist meditation on the breath a bad reputation.

Although the Buddha says to first experience long breaths and then experience short breaths, you do not need to control your breathing to fulfill the instructions. Controlling the breath produces only discomfort. Instead you are meant to simply observe the breath enough to know whether it is long or short. Even though this is not mentioned in the sutta, it is also fulfilling the instructions to observe the breath as neither long nor short, but somewhere close to the middle.

The reason for these instructions is that in the beginning you may find it uninteresting just to watch the feeling of air going in and out of your body, so this instruction gives you more to look at. It makes mindfulness of breathing more interesting. Sometimes I suggest to my students that at this stage they should notice which is longer, the in-breath or the out-breath. Is the gap between the in-breath and the next out-breath as long as the pause between the out-breath and the subsequent in-breath? Are the sensations of inbreathing the same as the sensations of outbreathing? This serves the same function as the Buddha's instructions to experience long breathing and short breathing. It gives mindfulness more details to watch so it won't get bored.

Another method that belongs to this stage is to make a beautiful story around the in and out breathing. I suggest to my students to remember that the oxygen that they are breathing in is being constantly replenished by the plants in the gardens and forests. And that the carbon dioxide they are breathing out is the food of the same plants. So imagine that you are breathing in a precious gift from the flowers and the trees, and that you are breathing out an equally valuable gift to the green nature around you. Your breathing is intimately connecting you with all the vibrant vegetation. Such an uplifting way of perceiving your own breathing makes it more easy to follow.

In the Thai forest tradition, they add a *mantra* to the breathing. As you breathe in you think "Bud" and as you breathe out you think "Dho." These are the two syllables of the Buddha's name (in Pāli nominative singular). Again, it serves to make the breathing easier to follow at this early stage.

The Third Step: Experiencing the Whole of the Breath

The third step is called in Pāli *sabba-kāya-patisamvedī*, experiencing the whole process of breathing. A minority of teachers mistake the Pāli term *kāya* to mean your physical body and so wrongly assume that now you are meant to direct your attention onto all the sensations in the whole of your physical body. This is an error. The Buddha clearly stated in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (MN 118,24) that he regarded the process of breathing as "a certain body *(kāya)* among the bodies." Moreover, the direction of the first twelve steps of ānāpānasati is toward simplifying the object of awareness, not making it more complex. Thus, this third step is where your mindfulness increases its agility sufficient to observe every sensation involved in the process of breathing.

You are aware of the in-breath from the very start when it arises out of the stillness. You see the sensations of inbreathing evolve in every moment, reaching its peak and then gradually fading away until it has completely subsided. You have such a degree of clarity that you even see the space, the pause between the in-breath and the next out-breath.Your mind has the attentiveness of a cat waiting for a mouse, as you wait for the next out-breath to begin. Then you observe the first stirrings of the outbreathing. You watch its sensations evolve, changing with every moment, until it too reaches a peak and then enters into its decline before fading into nothingness again. Then you observe the pause, the space between the out-breath and the subsequent in-breath. When the process is repeated breath after breath, you have fulfilled the third step, experiencing the whole breath.

In a classical Indian text, the *Mahābhārata,* there is an illustrative story of a teacher and his three students that I adapt as an explanation for this third step of ānāpānasati. The teacher was training his students in meditation using archery as the means. Having taught his three disciples a long time, he gave them a test to reveal their capabilities. He took a bird, a stuffed doll not a real bird, and carefully secured it to a branch of a tree a long distance from his students. It would take an awesome level of skill to pierce the bird with an arrow from such a distance. But the teacher made it almost impossible when he instructed his students: "I do not want you to hit that bird anywhere on its body. To pass this test, your arrow will have to pierce the left eye of the bird. That is the target."

He gave the bow and a single arrow to the first student and told him that he must meditate first, make his mind one with the target, and only then shoot the arrow. The student was told to take as much time as he liked, but before releasing the arrow he must give a sign to his teacher. Thirty minutes later the first student gave the sign that he was ready to shoot. The teacher told him to wait a few more seconds and asked:"Can you see the bird on the tree?"

Without breaking his concentrated gaze the student said, "Yes." At this the teacher pushed the student aside, grabbed the bow and arrow, and said: "You stupid student! Go back and learn how to meditate." He handed the bow and arrow to his second student and gave him the same instructions. This student took a whole hour before giving the teacher the sign that he was ready to shoot."Can you see the bird on the tree?" asked the teacher."What tree?" replied the student. The teacher then asked hopefully: "Can you see the bird?" The student replied,"Oh yes." Then the disappointed teacher shoved the second student aside, snatched the bow and arrow away, and told the second student to go learn how to meditate properly.

Finally he gave the bow and single arrow to his third student with the same instructions. The student took a whole two hours meditating, making his mind one with the target, the left eyeball of the bird. Then he gave the sign that he was ready to shoot. The teacher asked,"Can you see the bird on the tree?" The student replied, "What tree?" The teacher then asked, "Can you see the bird?" The student replied, "What bird?" The teacher started to smile and then continued,"What can you see?" Without averting his gaze the student replied, "Master, all I can see is an eyeball, that's all.""Cool," said the teacher,"Shoot." And of course the arrow went straight through the only thing that remained within the student's awareness.

This story is an accurate simile on how to achieve the third step of ānāpānasati, the experience of the whole breath. Just as the third student focused his whole mind on the target, for him the left eyeball of the bird, so you focus your whole attention on the third step of ānāpānasati, for you the experience of the whole breath. When you have accomplished this third step, if you were to ask yourself, "Can you hear sounds?" you would answer, "What sounds?" "Can you feel the body?"—"What body?""What can you see?"—"Only the breath happening now." Cool.

The Fourth Step: Calming the Breath

When you are comfortably at one with the breath, it will calm down automatically. There is so little remaining to disturb your progress that you naturally experience the sensations in each moment becoming softer and smoother, like a piece of rough denim changing into fine satin. Or you may assist this process by interrupting the inner silence for a few moments and suggesting to yourself “calm, calm, calm.” Then you return to silently experiencing only the breath again. By doing this you are instructing the gatekeeper as was described in chapter 5.

If you jump to the fourth step too soon you will fall prey to sloth and torpor.You must capture a wild horse before you can train it, in the same way you must capture the whole breath, fulfilling step three, before you attempt to calm it down.

Meditators who have achieved step three by using their willpower find it impossible to calm or soften their breath. They have been striving instead of letting go, and now they are blocked. When you are holding a flower you should never grasp it tightly, or you will destroy it. Delicate objects require a delicate touch. To hold the calm breath in the middle of mindfulness for many minutes, you need a very refined mind. Such a refinement of attention is only achieved through gentle and persistent letting go; it is never attained by the brute force of sheer willpower.

When a carpenter begins to saw a piece of wood he can see the whole saw from the handle to the tip of the saw blade. As he concentrates on the cut, the attention focuses closer and closer on the point where the saw touches the wood. The handle and tip of the saw soon disappear from his vision. After a while, all he can see is the one sawtooth that is in contact with the wood, whereas all the teeth to the left and right are beyond his range of perception. He does not know, nor does he need to know, whether that sawtooth is at the beginning, middle, or end of the blade. Such concepts have been transcended. This is the simile of the saw.

In the same way, at this fourth step, you will only know this bit of breath happening now. You simply do not know whether it is an in-breath or out-breath, beginning, middle, or end. As your breath calms down your attention becomes so refined that all you know is this one moment of breath.

The Fifth and Sixth Steps:

Experiencing Joy and Happiness with the Breath

In the fifth step of ānāpānasati you experience joy *(pīti)* along with the breath, and in the sixth step you experience happiness *(sukha)* along with the breath. Because joy and happiness are difficult to separate, and since they usually arrive together anyway, I will treat them as one.

As your unbroken mindfulness watches the breath calming down, joy and happiness naturally arise like the golden light of dawn on an eastern horizon. It will arise gradually but automatically because all your mental energy is now flowing into the knower and not the doer. In fact, you are doing nothing, only watching. The sure sign that you are doing nothing is the tranquillity of your breath. In the early hours of the morning it is only a matter of time until the horizon glows with the first light of day, just as when you remain still with the calm breath it is only a matter of time until joy and happiness appear in your mind. Mental energy flowing into the knower makes mindfulness full of power, and energized mindfulness is experienced as *pīti-sukha,* happiness and joy.

If you reach step four and are continuously mindful of a very calm breath but see no happiness or joy, then my advice is: "Don't panic!" Don't spoil the natural process with your impatience. When you do anything at this stage you just delay, or even prevent, the arrival of happiness and joy. Instead just deepen the experience of the continuous calm breath. Are you fully aware of the peaceful breath, or have interruptions crept in? Perhaps the lack of progress is because you are not continually mindful of only the breath. Has your breath stopped growing calmer? Perhaps the breath isn't peaceful enough yet. If so, give it more time. This is a natural process completely independent of you. When mindfulness rests comfortably on the breath without any interruptions, and the sensation of breath becomes calmer and calmer, then happiness and joy will always arise.

It helps if you are able to spot *pīti-sukha* early. To do this you have to be familiar with what you are looking for. The happiness and joy that are associated with tranquillity can start off as extremely subtle. It is like someone who prefers hard rock attending a performance of classical music by Mahler, and who can't comprehend why the audience pays good money to listen to such stuff. They just don't get it. Or like the person who usually eats at cheap diners going for the first time to a five-star French restaurant and not appreciating the cuisine because their palate is too coarse. As you meditate more and more, you become a connoisseur of tranquil mind states and will naturally apprehend the arrival of joy and happiness at an increasingly early stage.

The fulfillment of these fifth and sixth steps of ānāpānasati is precisely the same as reaching the stage of full sustained awareness of the beautiful breath in my basic method of meditation. The beauty of the breath at this level is my way of describing the experience of joy and happiness. The breath at this stage appears so tranquil and beautiful, more attractive than a garden in springtime or a sunset in summer, and you wonder if you will ever want to look at anything else.

The Seventh Step:

Experiencing the Breath as a Mind Object

As the breath becomes ever more beautiful, as the joy and happiness grow in quiet strength, your breath may appear to completely disappear. In chapter 2, I described this as the breath dropping away from the beautiful breath leaving only the beautiful. I also gave the simile of the grinning Cheshire Cat, who gradually disappeared leaving only the grin, to depict this event. This precisely describes the passage from stage five and six, experiencing joy and happiness with the breath, to stage seven where the breath is known only as a mind object.

To clarify this transition, I invoke the Buddha's analysis of conscious experience into the six sense bases (SN 35)—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and the mind base of knowing. In the early stages of meditation you abandon seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting to the point where these four sense bases completely shut down for a while. Then you let go of most of the activity of the fifth sense base, touching, by focusing on the touch (physical sensation) of the breath to the exclusion of everything else. The sixth sense base, the mind, is operating throughout. As you pass into this seventh step, the fifth sense base, touching, now shuts down to leave only the sixth sense base, the mind, to know the breath. You are now experiencing the breath through a new sense base.

Imagine an old friend, fuzzy-haired and bearded, who usually goes around in ordinary old clothes. Then he is ordained as a Buddhist monk. When you first see him in the monastery, you probably won't recognize him with his bald head and robes. But it is the same old friend regardless. He appears different in the new setting, that's all. In the same way, your old friend the breath usually goes around dressed in the sensations of touch and is recognized mainly through the fifth sense base. In the seventh step of ānāpānasati, your breath has transcended the world of the five sense bases, in particular the fifth sense base, and is now to be known only through the sixth sense, as a mind object. This is why the Buddha called this step experiencing the *citta-sankhāra,* the mind object.

So if your breath seems to disappear at this stage, be reassured that this is meant to happen, and don't go disturbing the process by searching here and there for the previous perception of breath. Instead, when the breath seems to disappear, ask yourself what is left? If you have followed the instructions carefully, the breath will only seem to disappear after happiness and joy have been established, and so what is left is happiness and joy. Your mindfulness has to be subtle and still to recognize this fine object at first, but with the familiarity born of long experience, the insight will come to you that this subtle happiness and joy is your old friend the breath, only now experienced as a mind object.

If you are unable to remain with this mind object it is because there was insufficient happiness and joy with the breath at steps five and six. You should train in cultivating a *very* beautiful breath with heaps of joy and happiness before you let the fifth sense base shut down. Then you will have a stronger mind object to watch. However, with much practice, you will know what you are looking for at step seven, the mindfulness will be more deft at holding subtle levels of happiness and joy, and you will be able to let go of the fifth sense base earlier and still be able to hold the weaker mental object.

The Eighth Step: Calming the Mental Experience

It can often happen, at this and subsequent stages of the meditation process, that the joy and happiness can become too exciting and therefore disturb the tranquillity. Because of this, the Buddha taught the eighth step of ānāpānasati as calming the mental experience of the breath.

When new meditators, and old ones too sometimes, start to experience some bliss, they carelessly generate the "wow!" response: Wow! At last! Amazing!—and immediately their bliss walks right out of the door. They were too excited.

Alternatively, fear can arise alongside the bliss: This is too much for me! This is scary, I don't deserve this!—and again the bliss departs. The fear destroyed the tranquillity.

So beware of these two enemies, fear and excitement, which can appear at this stage. Remember to keep calming the mental experience of the breath. This bliss is the happiness and joy born of peace, born of silence. Maintain the causes of that bliss. Remain in the stillness, otherwise the bliss will go away.

Ajahn Chah's famous simile of the "still forest pool" helps us understand what's happening here. Others have written about this image, but not in full. This is the way I remember Ajahn Chah explaining it. When he was wandering in the jungles and forests on what we call *tudong* in Thailand, he'd always try and find a stretch of water when late afternoon came. He needed water to bathe. After walking though the jungle, sweating from the heat and the exertion, if you don't bathe in the evening you feel uncomfortably dirty and sticky all night. He also needed water to drink. For these reasons Ajahn Chah searched for a pool, a stream, or a spring somewhere in the forest. When he found one, he'd camp nearby overnight.

Sometimes after drinking and bathing and settling in, Ajahn Chah would sit in meditation a few yards away from the pool. He said that sometimes he used to sit so still with his eyes open that he would see many animals coming out of the jungle. They wanted to bathe and drink as well. He said they would only come out if he sat very, very still, because jungle creatures are timid and far more afraid of human beings than we are of them. When they emerged from the bushes they would look around and sniff to see if it was safe. If they detected him, they would just go away. But if he sat absolutely still, the animals wouldn't be able to hear him. They wouldn't even be able to smell him. Then they would come out and drink. Some would drink and play in the water as if he weren't there, as if he were invisible. He said that sometimes he was so still that, after the ordinary animals came out, some very strange animals emerged, beings whose names he didn't know. He'd never seen such extraordinary creatures before. His parents had never told him about them. These wonderful creatures came out to drink, but only if he was *absolutely still*.

This is a well-drawn simile of what happens in deep meditation. The pool or lake is a symbol for the mind. At this eighth step of ānāpānasati you are just sitting before it and watching. If you give any orders you're not being still. Beautiful creatures—nimittas and jhānas—will approach only if you're absolutely still. If they come out to "sniff around" and you say "wow!" they hurtle back into the forest and don't come out again. If they come out and you look at them, even out of the corners of your eyes, they'll know it and go away.You can't move if you want these beings to come out and play. But if you're absolutely still—no controlling, no doing, no saying, no moving, or anything else —nimittas come out. They look around and sniff the air. If they think no one is there, they come and play right in front of you. But if you move even an eyelid, they go away again. *Only if you're absolutely still do they remain.* The ordinary ones come out first, then the very beautiful ones, and lastly the very strange and wonderful ones. These last are the amazing experiences that you have no names for, the ones you never imagined could exist because they're so strange, so blissful,so pure. These are the jhānas.

This wonderful simile of Ajahn Chah's is a measure of his wisdom, of his profound understanding of the mind. This indeed is how the mind works, and having that wisdom is a tremendous power. The extraordinary jhānas can happen when you arouse joy and happiness in the mind, when you understand that this joy and happiness is not other than the mind experiencing the breath, and when you calm down the whole process of observing.

The Ninth Step: Experiencing the Mind

The ninth step of the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* describes a very important creature that comes to visit the still, silent mind—a nimitta. The step is called *citta-paṭisaṁvedī*, "experiencing the mind." It's only at this stage that you can truly say that you can know the mind. Some people have theories and ideas of what the mind is, and they try to test them out with scientific equipment. They even write entire books about the mind. But this is the only place where you can actually experience the mind.

The way you experience the mind is by a nimitta, which is a reflection of the mind. Remember the mind is that which knows. But is it possible for the knower to know itself? The eye is that which sees, but it can see itself when it looks into a mirror: it sees its reflection. The reflection you see in this stage of meditation, the nimitta, is a true reflection of the mind. You look into a mirror that has been cleaned of all the dust and grime on its surface, and now at last you can see yourself. You can only experience the mind directly through a nimitta or jhāna.

When a nimitta arises it's so very strange that it's next to impossible to describe. Language is built on similes. We describe something as hard like a brick, or soft like the grass. We always use similes from the world of the five senses. But the world of the mind is so different that language fails us. After your first experience of a nimitta you think,"What on earth was that?" You know it's a real experience, but you struggle to find language to describe it. You have to use imperfect similes: it's like a light, like a blissful feeling, sort of like this, sort of like that. You know it's so completely different from any previous experience, but you have to somehow describe it to yourself. That's why I keep on saying that you experience the nimitta sometimes as a light, sometimes as a feeling, sometimes as…a blob of Jell-O, or whatever. They are all exactly the same experience, but we give it different words. For many meditators, however, the mind flashes up very quickly and then disappears again. It's like the animal coming out of the forest. It senses someone becoming excited and flees.

Some meditators have difficulty in seeing nimittas. They reach the stage of calming the beautiful breath and nothing happens. No light appears. They wonder what they are doing wrong. The following analogy may help.

Late one night, I stepped outside from my brightly lit *kuti* (monk's hut) into the dense darkness of the forest. I had no flashlight. It was so black that I could not see anything. I remained still, patient. Slowly, my eyes became accustomed to the darkness. Soon I could make out the shapes of the tree trunks, and then I could look up and see the beautiful stars, the whole Milky Way even, glittering brilliantly in the night sky.

Experiencing nimittas can be like this. In the formless stillness when the breath seems to disappear, at first one can see nothing. Be patient. Do nothing but wait. Soon mindfulness will become accustomed to this “darkness” beyond its usual habitat (the room of the brightly lit five senses) and it begins to see shapes, dimly at first. After a while, the beautiful starlike nimittas may appear, and, if one is still long enough, the best nimittas of all appear, like the brilliant disc of the full moon at night, released from the clouds.

The Tenth Step: Shining the Nimitta

Two flaws of the nimitta may hinder further progress: the nimitta appears too dull, and the nimitta is unstable. To address these two common problems, the Buddha taught the tenth and eleventh steps of ānāpānasati: shining the nimitta and sustaining the nimitta.“Shining” is my expression for the Pāli term *abhippamodayaṁ cittaṁ,* literally,“giving joy to the mind.” The more joy there is in the mind, the more brilliant shines the nimitta. To enter jhāna, the nimitta has to be the most brilliant thing that you have ever seen, and of unearthly beauty.

Let’s look at why the nimitta can appear dull or even dirty. It is very instructive to recall that the nimitta is just a reflection of your mind. If the nimitta is dull, it means that your mind is dull. If the nimitta is dirty, then it means that your mind is defiled. There is no possibility for dishonesty or denial here, for you are face-to-face with the truth of your mind state.

It is here that the importance of *sīla* (moral conduct) becomes apparent. If the mind is defiled due to impure action, speech, or thought, then the nimitta, if it appears at all, will be dull and stained. If that is your experience, then spend some effort purifying your conduct beyond the meditation cushion. Keep the precepts faultlessly. Check your speech. The Buddha said that without first purifying sīla, it is impossible to purify samādhi (AN VII,61).

Generous, compassionate people with strong faith have what is commonly called a “pure heart.” From my experience teaching meditation, it is a general rule that such purehearted meditators are the ones who experience the bright nimittas. So in addition to keeping your precepts spotless, develop what is known as the pure heart.

However, sometimes even good-hearted people experience dull nimittas. Usually this is because their mental energy is low, maybe due to ill health or overwork. A skillful means of avoiding this problem is to spend some meditation periods developing the inspirational meditations, such as the reflections on the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. These should be contemplated until the mind becomes suffused with joy. Alternatively, if you are a very charitable sort of person, you could reflect on your past generosity and inspire yourself that way. The Buddha called this *cāga-anussati*. Or you can spend some time on mettā. Once the mental energy is raised to a level of joyful brightness, then you can return to ānāpānasati.

Thus far, I have talked about techniques to shine up the nimitta before you even start ānāpānasati. They are, in fact, the most effective techniques. However, when a nimitta has arisen during meditation but appears dull, there are four ways of proceeding:

Focus on the center of the nimitta. Even in a dull nimitta, the center is brighter than the periphery. By gently suggesting to yourself to look at the center of the nimitta, the central brightness expands. Then focus on the center of that, and that is brighter still. By going to the center, then the center of the center, and so on, the dull nimitta soon becomes incredibly bright and often continues "exploding" in luminosity all the way into jhāna.

Sharpen the attention in the present moment. Even though present-moment awareness was part of the preliminaries to ānāpānasati, it often happens that by this stage the attention is "smeared" around the present moment. Personally, I often find that a gentle reminder to focus more sharply in the present moment brightens the mindfulness and shines up the nimitta, abolishing any dullness.

Smile at the nimitta. Remember that the nimitta is a reflection of your mind. So if the mind smiles, then the nimitta smiles back! It brightens. It may be that a residue of ill will (the second hindrance) is keeping the nimitta dull. Smiling is both gentle and powerful enough to overcome this subtle form of the hindrance. If you do not understand what I mean by smiling at the nimitta, go and look at yourself in a mirror, smile, and then take the mental part of that activity and repeat it in front of the nimitta.

Return to the beautiful breath. Sometimes it is simply too early to go to the nimitta, and it is better to exert a gentle determination to remain with the beautiful breath a bit longer. Even if the nimitta comes up, when it is dull ignore it and return to the mental experience of the breath. Often when I do this, after a short time the nimitta comes up again a little brighter. I ignore it again. It keeps coming up brighter and brighter, but I keep on ignoring it until a really gorgeous nimitta appears. Then I don't ignore it!

So these are the ways to "shine" the nimitta, polishing it, as it were, until it is brilliant, beautiful, and radiant.

The Eleventh Step: Sustaining the Nimitta

The second of the two flaws of the nimitta that hinder a deepening of the meditation experience is instability of the nimitta. It does not stay still but quickly disappears. In order to deal with this problem, the Buddha taught the eleventh step of ānāpānasati, *samādahaṁ cittaṁ,* literally "attentively stilling the mind" and here meaning "sustaining the attention on the nimitta."

It is common that the first few times a nimitta appears, it flashes up for a short time and then disappears, or else it moves around in the mental field of vision. It is unstable. Usually, the bright, powerful nimittas remain longer than the dull, weak ones, which is why the Buddha taught the step of shining the nimitta before the step of sustaining the nimitta. Sometimes shining the nimitta is enough to sustain it—the nimitta becomes so beautifully radiant that it grabs the attention for long periods of time. However, even a brilliant nimitta can be unstable, so there are methods to sustain attention on the nimitta.

The insight that helped me to sustain the nimitta was the realization that the nimitta that I was seeing in my mind was just a reflection of the knower, the one watching. If the knower moved, so did its reflection, the nimitta. Like staring at your image in front of a mirror, if you move then so does the image. So long as you are moving, it is a waste of time trying to keep the image still just by holding the mirror still. It doesn't work. Instead focus on the knower, that one who is experiencing this, and calm that into stillness. Then the image of this knower, the nimitta, will stabilize and appear motionless, gloriously constant.

Once again, it is usually fear or excitement that creates the instability. You are reacting too much rather than passively observing. Experiencing the nimitta for the first time is like meeting a complete stranger. Often, you are on edge because you do not know who they are or how they might behave. After getting to know them, though, you relax in their company. They are good friends, and you are at ease with them. The overreaction disappears. Or it is like when as a child you first learned how to ride a bicycle. For the first few rides, you probably gripped the handlebars so tightly that, like me, your knuckles went white. And because I wasn't relaxed, I kept falling off. I soon discovered, after many cuts and bruises, that the more relaxed I was, the easier it was to keep my balance. In the same way, you soon learn to stop gripping the nimitta.You relax and discover that the more you ease off controlling, the easier it is to sustain the nimitta.

Another skillful means that I developed to stop controlling was to use the image of driving a car. When a bright nimitta comes up, I give it the keys and say, "You drive from here on." I give it full trust, complete confidence. I actually try to visualize my trust and give it over to the bright nimitta. I realize that the last residue of the doer, the control freak, still wants to spoil things. So I use this metaphor to help give up all control. This is the point where I stop. When I stop, the nimitta stops with me.

After sustaining attention on the nimitta a while, it becomes even more brilliant and very powerful. The signs of good nimittas are that they are the most beautiful colors you've ever seen in your life. For example, if you see a blue nimitta, the color is no ordinary blue but the deepest, most beautiful, bluest blue you've ever known. The good, or should I say "useful," nimittas are also very stable, almost motionless. When you are experiencing a beautiful stable nimitta, you are on the edge of the world of jhānas, looking in.

The twelfth step in ānāpānasati is called *vimocayaṁ cittaṁ,* “freeing the mind.” Here, you have an experience that you might describe afterward in two different ways, depending upon your perspective. Either you find yourself sinking or diving into the nimitta, or the nimitta with its brilliant light and ecstatic feeling completely envelops you. *You* don’t do this. It just happens as the natural result of letting go of all doing.

You enter the jhāna through liberating the mind. The jhānas, the Buddha said, are stages of freedom *(vimokkha)* (DN 15,35). *Vimokkha* is the same word used to describe someone who is released from jail and walks free. You may know it from the Sanskrit *moksha* which has the same meaning. The mind is now free. That is, free from the body and the five senses. I’m not saying the mind is floating somewhere in an out-of-body experience.You are not located in space anymore, because all experiences of space are dependent on the five senses. Here the mind is free from all of that. You’re not at all sensitive to what’s happening with the body. You’re unable to hear anything, unable to say anything. You’re blissed out yet fully mindful, still, stable as a rock. These are signs of the mind being freed. This experience becomes one of the most powerful, if not *the* most powerful experience, of your life.

If you get a few of these jhānas, you usually want to become a monk or a nun. The world will have less attraction for you. Relationships, the arts, music and movies, sex, fame, wealth, and so on all seem so unimportant and unattractive when compared to jhānas and the bliss of the freed mind. But there is much more than just the bliss. There is also the philosophical profundity of the experience. When you’ve spent hours in a jhāna, you can call yourself a mystic, if you like.You’ve had an experience that in all religious traditions is called a mystical experience—something far from the ordinary. The Buddha called it *uttari-manussa-dhamma* (MN 31,10), something that surpasses ordinary human experience. He called it the mind “gone to greatness” *(mahā-ggata)*. He also considered the happiness of jhāna so similar to enlightenment happiness that he named it *sambodhi sukha* (MN 66,21). It’s a place where defilements cannot reach. So this is where Māra—the Buddhist devil—cannot reach you.You’re awakened and free during this time.

So if you develop these stages, the first twelve steps of ānāpānasati, they will lead you into jhāna.

Emerging from a Jhāna

The last four steps in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* relate to the meditator who has just emerged from a jhāna. After you emerge from your first experience of jhāna you can't help but think,"Wow, what was that?" So the first thing you should do is review the jhāna. Investigate that experience, though you will struggle to give it words. Ask yourself, How did it arise? What special thing did I do? What did it feel like in jhāna? Why did it feel like that? How do I feel now? Why is it so blissful? All these reflections will give rise to deep insight.

You'll find that the best two words to describe why jhāna happened are "letting go." You've really let go for the first time. Not letting go of what you're attached to, but *letting go of the thing doing the attaching*.You've let go of the doer. You've let go of the self. It's a difficult thing for the self to let go of the self, but through these methodical stages you've actually done it. And it's bliss.

So, having reflected on the experience, you either take up satipaṭṭhāna (the focuses of mindfulness) or just go directly to the last four stages of ānāpānasati.

The Thirteenth Step: Reflecting on Impermanence

The first reflection is on anicca, usually translated as impermanence but meaning much more than this. Its opposite, *nicca,* is the Pāli word used to describe a thing that is regular or constant. For instance, in the Vinaya a regular supply of almsfood, say from a disciple who brings food to a monastery every Tuesday, is called nicca food (Vin II,4,4,6). When that which was once constant stops, that's *anicca*. What's important to reflect upon after the deep experiences of meditation is that there was something that was so constant that you never noticed it—this thing we call a "self." In jhāna, it disappeared! Notice that. Noticing it will convince you of the truth of no-self *(anattā)* so deeply that it's very likely to give rise to the experience of stream winning.

The Fourteenth Step: Reflecting on Fading Away of Things

If reflections on anicca fail to work, there is *virāga,* the fading away of things—sometimes called dispassion. It has this dual meaning, but I usually prefer the meaning "fading away." This is when things just disappear. You've seen many things disappear when you enter jhāna—some of which were so close to you that you assumed that they were an essential part of your identity. They are all gone in jhāna. You're experiencing the fading away of your self.

The third reflection after emerging from a jhāna should be on *nirodha,* or cessation. Something that was once there has now completely disappeared. It has ended, gone, and its place is now empty! Such emptiness can be known only in deep meditation. So much of the universe that you thought was essential has ceased, and you're in a completely different space.

Cessation is also the third noble truth. The end of suffering is called cessation. The cause of that cessation is letting go. You've actually let go. Dukkha, suffering, has ended—most of it anyway, 99 percent. And what's left? What's the opposite of dukkha? Sukha. *The ending of suffering is happiness.* That's why you should reflect that these jhānas are the most blissful experience you've ever felt in your existence. And if you've got a little bit of wisdom or intelligence, you will see that the bliss arises because so much dukkha has ceased.

You experience happiness and you know the cause. Imagine that you had a migraine headache for many, many months and someone gave you a new medicine that had just been invented, saying it works for some but not for everybody. So you take it and find that it works for you. Your migraine has gone! How would you feel? You'd be high as a kite. You'd be blissed out! Sometimes you'd be crying with happiness. The ending of pain is happiness. Why is it that schoolchildren feel so happy when they finish their end-of-year school exams? It is because a lot of suffering has just ended. So often, the happiness in the world is just a measure of how much suffering preceded it. When you finally pay off the mortgage on your house, you feel so happy; all the pain of working for months and years to pay it off is gone.

The Sixteenth Step: Reflecting on Letting Go, Abandoning

The last of the reflections in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* is on this beautiful word *paṭinissagga,* "letting go, abandoning." In this context *paṭinissagga* is giving away not what's "out there" but what's "in here." Many times people regard Buddhism as being unworldly, giving away what's out there. But paṭinissagga is the letting go of the inner world, the letting go of the doer and even the knower. If you look very carefully, you'll see that what has been happening in jhāna is not only letting go of the external world but also letting go of the internal world, especially letting go of the doer, the will, the controller. This insight gives rise to so much happiness, so much purity, so much freedom, so much bliss. You've found the path to the ending of suffering.

That is how the Buddha described ānāpānasati. It's a complete practice that starts with just sitting down in a quiet place, on a comfortable seat, mindful of what's in front of you and just watching the breath. Step by step—in steps that you know are within your ability—you reach these profound and blissful states called jhāna.

When you emerge from them, you have any one of these four things to contemplate: *anicca,* the impermanence or uncertainty of things; *virāga,* the fading away of things; *nirodha,* cessation of self; and *paṭinissagga,* letting go of all that's "in here." And if you reflect upon those things after the experience of jhāna, then something is going to happen. I often say that jhāna is the gunpowder and reflection is the match. If you put the two together, then there's going to be a bang somewhere. It's only a matter of time.

May you all experience those beautiful bangs called enlightenment!

8

The Four Focuses of Mindfulness

IN THIS CHAPTER I will explain the four focuses of mindfulness, or satipaṭṭhāna, and their bearing on the practice of meditation described thus far.

First of all, the practice of satipaṭṭhāna is not the only way to realize enlightenment, as some overenthusiastic interpreters would claim. According to the Buddha, the only way to realize enlightenment is by means of the noble eightfold path (Dhp 273-74). Satipaṭṭhāna is the seventh factor of the noble eightfold path. Anyone who practices a "onefold path," such as by developing satipaṭṭhāna but neglecting other factors, will not realize enlightenment. Just as anyone who tries to bake a cake using only one ingredient, say, flour, will go hungry.

For the above reason, the explanation of satipaṭṭhāna given here is in the context of the noble eightfold path, demonstrating how the other seven factors of the noble eightfold path are a prerequisite and support for satipaṭṭhāna practice.

Some authors have also claimed that satipaṭṭhāna practice is original to Buddhism, that it is the Buddha's unique discovery that led to his enlightenment and the subsequent enlightenment of his arahant disciples. This, however, is not plausible. Satipaṭṭhāna, as I explain in this chapter, is a focusing of mindfulness on such things as the body, feelings, mind states, and the like. Intelligent and inquisitive people in all races and religions have directed their mindfulness to aspects of nature in order to understand their meaning. Investigation is not unique to Buddhism.

What was original to Buddhism is the practice of jhāna. The realization of a jhāna requires a delicate balance of lifestyle. That balance is called the "Middle Way" (see the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta,* MN 36,31-33). That Middle Way was frowned upon both by ascetics at the time of the Buddha and by people in the world. For example, the Buddha's five ascetic friends left him in disgust when he embarked on the Middle Way. The originality of the Buddha was in using the experience of jhāna to empower investigation, to give mindfulness a huge boost.

Preparing for Satipaṭṭhāna

Satipaṭṭhāna has been commonly translated as "foundations of mindfulness." However, the more accurate and meaningful translation is "focuses of mindfulness." The teaching of satipaṭṭhāna instructs the meditator where to place mindfulness. If we think of mindfulness as like a flashlight beam, then satipaṭṭhāna shows the meditator where to shine that beam to uncover enlightening truths.

In the two versions of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* that have come down to us (DN 22; MN 10), the Buddha said that "if anyone should develop the satipaṭṭhāna in such a way" (as described in those suttas) for seven days, then they would realize either full enlightenment or the stage of the nonreturner. Many Buddhists, monastic and lay, have completed many meditation retreats longer than seven days and remain unenlightened. Please don't blame the Buddha! Instead, look again at the Buddha's promise: "If anyone should develop the satipaṭṭhāna *in such a way*…" The reason why enlightenment doesn't happen is that they do not practice satipaṭṭhāna in the right way. They are like the person who buys an expensive, high-tech household appliance, unpacks it, assembles it, and excitedly plugs it into a power socket. BANG! Something has gone wrong. Only then do they read the instruction manual. Shouldn't we always read the manual first? The reason that Buddhists do not achieve enlightenment is that they do not practice satipaṭṭhāna according to the manual.

The Buddha taught two types of satipaṭṭhāna. The first type is supported by jhāna and leads to enlightenment in a short time. The second type, without jhāna, produces valuable insights, especially ones that enable you to let go and come closer to jhāna, but does not lead to enlightenment. Both types are found in the suttas. In this chapter, I will focus mainly on the first type of satipaṭṭhāna practice.

The Importance of Jhāna for Satipaṭṭhāna

The suttas say that one practices satipaṭṭhāna "having put away covetousness and grief for the world." This is the usual translation of the Pāli *vineyya loke abhijjhā-domanassam,* but it is a wretched rendering. It was first suggested by the well-meaning Professor Rhys Davids over a hundred years ago and has stuck. Not only is the rendering meaningless in practical terms, it is also erroneous. This misleading translation is the main reason why modern Western Buddhists misunderstand the instruction manual and find satipaṭṭhāna not working for them.

As the commentaries explain it, the phrase actually means "having temporarily abandoned the five hindrances." This explanation is consistent with the use of these Pāli words elsewhere in the suttas. That means that a prerequisite for the practice of satipaṭṭhāna is the abandoning of the five hindrances first! This is part of the instruction manual that Buddhists do not apply and that keeps satipaṭṭhāna from delivering the goods.

It is the function of jhāna to abandon, temporarily, the five hindrances. (See the *Naḷakapāna Sutta,* MN 68,6:"not attaining a jhāna, the five hindrances invade one's mind and remain. Attaining a jhāna, the five hindrances do not invade the mind and remain.") Anyone who has experienced a jhāna knows that after emerging, one's mindfulness is so powerful and so easy to sustain. This is the result of the five hindrances being absent.

I remember going out with the girls as a young student at university. At parties the lights were always dimmed. When we went out for dinner, it was by candlelight. When we canoodled on the riverbank, it was under silvery moonlight. I realized that for romance to happen, it had to be dark. So dark, in fact, that I couldn't really see who I was going out with.

Weak mindfulness is like going out at night. You can't see clearly. Maybe all you can see are the silhouettes. Some people like weak mindfulness. They do not want to see the way things truly are, because mindfulness reveals some truths about life that they do not want to face. Many people would rather be infatuated with fantasy, dopey with drugs, or sozzled by spirits. Others run away from being mindful by being busy. Only a few have the courage and honesty to be mindful.

If mindfulness is like a light, meditation brightens that light. When I was a young monk at Wat Pa Nanachat in Northeast Thailand, I became quite peaceful by doing walking meditation in the hall. I would walk with my gaze on a spot on the concrete floor some two meters ahead. Then I had to stop. I couldn't believe it, but the dull concrete surface began to open up into a picture of magnificent beauty. The various shades of gray and the texture suddenly appeared as the most beautiful picture I had ever seen. I thought of cutting out that section and sending it to the Tate Gallery in London. It was a work of art. An hour or two later, it was just a boring, ordinary piece of concrete again.

What had happened, and this may have happened to you, is that I had a short experience of "power mindfulness." In power mindfulness, the mind is like a megawatt searchlight, enabling you to see so much deeper into what you are gazing at. Ordinary concrete becomes a masterpiece. A blade of grass literally shimmers with the most delightful and brilliant shades of fluorescent green. A twig metamorphoses into a boundless universe of shape, color, and structure. The petty becomes profound and the humdrum becomes heavenly under the sparkling energy of power mindfulness.

What is happening is that the five hindrances are being abandoned. The five hindrances are said, in the suttas, to "weaken wisdom." When they are gone, the experience is like seeing through a windshield that has been cleaned of grime and dust, or hearing through ears at last unclogged of wax, or reflecting with a mind released from its fog. When you know the difference between power mindfulness and weak mindfulness as a personal experience, not a mere idea, then you will understand the necessity for jhāna prior to satipaṭṭhāna.

Jhāna generates "superpower" mindfulness. If power mindfulness is like a megawatt searchlight, then jhāna-generated superpower mindfulness is like a terawatt sun. If enlightenment is your goal, then the superpower mindfulness is the level that's needed. Anyone who has experienced the states after jhāna would understand why this is so. Consider this simile: weak mindfulness is like digging a hole with a teaspoon; power mindfulness is like digging a hole with a spade; superpower mindfulness is like digging a hole with a huge backhoe that can excavate in one scoop what would take you years to dig out with a spoon.

I want to demonstrate how sustaining mindfulness on a single object uncovers the nature of you: the nature of your mind and body. I will do so by returning to the simile of the thousand-petaled lotus.

Recall that a lotus closes all of its petals during the night. In the morning the first rays of the sun begin to warm the lotus. This is the trigger for the lotus to open its petals. It takes a long time, many minutes, for the warmth to build up enough for the first layer of petals to open. If the day is cloudy or misty then it takes a very long time. Once the outermost petals are opened, the warmth of the sun can shine on the next layer of petals, and after a few minutes of uninterrupted light they too open up. This allows the next layer to receive the warmth, and soon it opens up in turn. Lotuses have many layers of petals and so take a long time to fully open. A thousand-petaled lotus requires a very strong sun, sustained for a very long time, to open every petal and reveal the famed jewel at its heart.

In satipaṭṭhāna, the thousand-petaled lotus is a simile for this body-mind, that is, "you"—or whatever you like to call that which is sitting somewhere right now reading this page. The sun is a simile for mindfulness. You have to sustain power mindfulness for a very long time on this body and mind to allow the innermost petals to open up. If the five hindrances are there, no insight happens, just as when there are clouds or mist, the sun cannot warm the lotus.

If you haven't sustained power mindfulness on this body and mind for long, then your understanding sees only outer petals. But if you generate power mindfulness and sustain it on the body-mind continuously, then you begin to see all this in a completely different light.You thought that you knew what "you" were, but now you realize how deluded you were and how little you knew. Through sustaining power mindfulness on the body and mind, truths start to unfold.

As you meditate in this way, all the old labels disappear. All the old ideas—who you had thought you were, what you were told you were, and what you believed you were—are outer petals. They open up to reveal much deeper truths. Labels and ideas are old conditioning. They are superficial descriptions that hide the truth lying within. As these outer petals are removed, you start to see things that you have never seen before. You experience things for which you cannot find a label, which are beyond every learned perception. Most of our perceptions are merely repetitions of what we were taught in school or at home."Cow,""dog," "monk,""policeman," all these are examples of inaccurate labels that we are trained to attach to objects in the world."Thought,""feeling,""consciousness," and "self " are examples of erroneous labels that we have been trained to attach to objects in the mind. They are just so many learned perceptions that hide the truth.

This simile is called the “thousand-petaled lotus” because there are a thousand or so levels of reality to uncover. The practice of meditation takes many hours of sitting, uncovering many deep layers of delusion and wrong ideas about yourself and the world. When the Buddha taught that the root cause of suffering is *avijjā,* or delusion, he did not say that it would be easy to uncover. Avijjā is uncovered, as it were, in layers, like the opening of the lotus petals.

A danger that you should be wary of in your spiritual life, especially in your meditation, is overestimation of your attainment. Sometimes when power mindfulness on the body-mind is sustained, insights appear. Maybe the sun has warmed the lotus so well that forty-nine petals have opened up and you see petal fifty of the thousand-petaled lotus. This fiftieth petal is so beautiful and profound that you think, “Wow! This is it, I've finally understood what’s at the heart of this lotus.” Sorry, my friend, but you’ve got another nine hundred and fifty petals to go. So be careful. You’re not fully enlightened yet.

When petal number one thousand opens up, so beautiful and unworldly, then you see the famed jewel in the heart of the lotus. Do you know what that jewel is?—a diamond? a ruby? No, it’s emptiness.You see the priceless gem of emptiness in the very heart of the body-mind, and this is not what you would ever have expected. That’s how you know it is not just another petal. Emptiness is something of a completely different nature to every other petal, to every other thing. Nothing! To reach this far usually requires superpower mindfulness sustained on its focus for a very long time.

The Purpose of Satipaṭṭhāna

Another essential requirement before starting satipaṭṭhāna is to fully comprehend the purpose of satipaṭṭhāna. The purpose of any practice will help explain how it should be done. When you have a clear idea of the goal, then you are more likely to arrive.

So what is the purpose of satipaṭṭhāna? The purpose is to see anattā, that there is no self, no me, nor anything that belongs to a self. As it says in the texts,"Such mindfulness is established enough to discern that there are just the body, feelings, mind, and objects of mind" and that these are not me, nor mine, nor a self (this is how I translate a repeated phrase in the suttas).

When you keep in mind that the purpose of satipaṭṭhāna is to uncover the delusion of me, mine, or a self, to see anattā or the "emptiness in the heart of the lotus," then the way of practice becomes clear. In particular you can appreciate why the Buddha taught just four focuses for mindfulness: body, feelings, mind, and mind objects. He taught these four because these are the major areas where life assumes a "me" or a "mine."

So the satipaṭṭhāna practice sustains superpower mindfulness on each of the four objects in order to unravel the illusion of a self. You have been deluded for too long, identifying with the physical body, regarding your feelings as yours (and therefore subject to your control), assuming the mind (the process of knowing) to be your self, and attaching to the objects of mind as matters of concern to you.

Summary of the Preliminaries

These then are the preparations for successful satipaṭṭhāna practice. In tabular form they are:

1. *vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*—first abandon the five hindrances through an experience of jhāna.
2. *satimā*—be possessed of superpower mindfulness resulting from jhāna.
3. *atāpi*—diligently sustain that superpower mindfulness on the focus.
4. *sampajāno*—keep in mind the purpose of satipaṭṭhāna: to realize no-self.

Now I will describe the practice of satipaṭṭhāna on each of the four focuses in turn.

Body Contemplation

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas* there are fourteen areas for focusing mindfulness involving the body. They are grouped as follows: (1) breath, (2) bodily posture, (3) bodily activity, (4) composition of the body, (5) the body seen as four elements, and (6) the nine corpse contemplations. Here, I will discuss briefly all but the fifth.

Breath

In Indian philosophy, the breath (*prāṇa* in Sanskrit) is sometimes considered to be the vital essence of a human being. Indeed, the Pāli word for “animal” is the same as the word for “breath,” *pāṇa*. Similarly, the English word *animal* is derived from the Latin *animalis*, meaning “having breath.” Certainly, in ancient times the breath was considered to be such an important part of life that it was thought to be almost identical to a self or soul.

By focusing superpower mindfulness on the breath, it is possible to experience the breath as an empty process, completely subject to conditioning, with no being in here doing the breathing. Moreover, in deep jhāna, we can experience the breath disappearing altogether (in the fourth jhāna) with no danger to life.

During my teacher Ajahn Chah’s long sickness, he would often stop breathing. On one such occasion the new nurse on duty became alarmed. He knew that Ajahn Chah must die one day, but he didn’t want it to happen on his shift! The attendant monks on duty that night reassured him that Ajahn Chah had done the same many times before and that it was just a sign of deep meditation. The nurse was still worried and so took blood samples every few minutes during the hours without breathing to ensure that the blood was still well oxygenated. After all, as long as there is enough oxygen available in the blood there will be no harm to the body. The nurse discovered that even though Ajahn Chah was not breathing for a long time, the oxygen level in the blood remained constant. In jhāna, the metabolism is so slowed down that you are using almost zero energy. You don’t need to breathe.

Why is it that ordinary people gasp when they are excited, or struggle for breath just before they die? Perhaps their attachment to their breath is deeper than they realized. Remember, satipaṭṭhāna uncovers attachments that are completely unexpected. When you experience the cessation of breath, then it is obvious that it is not yours at all. From that insight, attachment to breath unravels.

Bodily Postures and Bodily Activities

There are two ways to understand something: by contemplating what it is made of and by contemplating what it does. Here we are analyzing this body by contemplating what it does. It is an illusion to think that *I* am walking, standing, lying down, sitting, stretching my arm, and so on. The truth is that there is a body doing this, not an *I*.

Many high achievers in sports, the arts, or even meditation, describe a state of selflessness called entering the "zone." When a famous classical Indian dancer I knew was asked how she could perform to such a high standard, she replied that she practices and practices, but when the performance begins, she deliberately forgets everything she has been taught. She "gets herself out of the way" and allows the dance to take over. This is a classic description of entering the zone. When the athlete is in the zone, she can move effortlessly, gracefully, and faultlessly. When the meditator is in the zone, he can watch samādhi deepen beautifully, seamlessly, and wordlessly. You clearly experience all this as mere process, with no being driving the process. It is anattā, no-self.

You observe bodily postures and activities with superpower mindfulness and quickly enter a zone where all bodily postures and activities are seen to be mere cause-driven processes, not self-driven ones.You become less of a control freak concerning this body. You detach and live at ease.

Some teachers mistakenly think that mindfulness must always be focused on activities in the present moment. In fact the Pāli word for mindfulness, *sati,* also means remembering. Superpower mindfulness can focus on an object many moments old, bore into it without the object fading, and uncover its truth.

For example, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* one is asked to practice mindfulness focused on sleeping. Even arahants are not aware when they're asleep, so what does this mean? Some translators have attempted to solve this question by changing the meaning of the exercise to mindfulness on falling asleep. However, the Pāli word used in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* means "in sleep," and there is a different phrase for falling asleep, *niddaṃ okkamati.* The practice of mindfulness focused on sleeping means one uses a previous experience of having been asleep as the focus of superpower mindfulness in the present. It is mindfulness that takes an old experience as its object. This may seem pedantic to you now, but it becomes crucially important, as you will see, when I explain the focus of mindfulness on the citta (mind consciousness).

Composition of the Body

I remember when I was about eleven years old watching a television program on my parents' black-and-white set that showed in gory detail major surgical operations common at that time. My parents and my brother had to leave the room, but they let me watch after I argued that the program was educational. I found it fascinating to see the innards of a body.

Many years later as a Buddhist monk I was eager to observe autopsies in Thailand and Australia. What fascinates me now is why some persons are repelled by the very thought of watching an autopsy, and often faint when they attend one. Even though we have all been taught biology at school, most of us are still in denial about the nature of our bodies. Why else would we faint or groan when seeing guts exposed?

We have a huge amount of attachment to this body, a delusion that causes us much suffering. By focusing superpower mindfulness on the composition of your body, you can penetrate the barrier of denial and fear and see the body as it truly is. It is just a body. Bits and pieces strung together and falling apart, neither beautiful nor ugly, neither strong nor weak. It is simply a thing of nature, not something of yours. Can you keep it fit and healthy forever? Can you stop it from dying? So who owns your body? Surely it must be obvious that nature owns your body, not you.

The sign that you have penetrated the truth of the body is the complete lack of fear about your own death. Another test of your insight is your response when a loved relative or close friend dies. If you receive a phone call telling you they have just been killed in a road accident and you reply, “Yes, that's to be expected,” then you are free of attachment to the body.

The Corpse Meditations

Meditation on a corpse combines the contemplations of what a body is and what a body does. It produces revulsion at the beginning, insight in the middle, and liberation in the end. It's powerful and effective.

A corpse from a road accident is quickly covered and sent to a funeral home, where it is embalmed and made up with cosmetics. The embalmer's skill makes Uncle George look like he is happily sleeping rather than stone dead. We do not want to see a corpse as it truly is. We are more content to have the fantasy. Unfortunately, delusion demands a heavy price. The longer we delay understanding death, the more we will have to suffer from it.

When superpower mindfulness is focused on a corpse or on the clear memory of one, the dead body opens up like a thousand-petaled lotus and reveals the truth hidden deep beneath the surface. The corpse is teaching you that this is what your body does—it gets old, falls apart, and dies. This is the destiny of your body and all others. Such insight produces dispassion with regard to this body and disinterest in getting another body. Seeing a corpse disintegrate and return to its natural state proves once again who the real owner is—nature. No longer will you be attached to your body, take delight in your partner's body, or fear death. And if the insight reaches to the core, then you will never again come to birth in another body.

Feeling Contemplation

The second focus of mindfulness is feeling *(vedanā)*. This term needs explanation because "feeling" is not quite accurate as a translation. In English "feeling" has a wide range of meanings. It can mean both emotional states and physical sensations in the body. The Pāli word *vedanā* means that quality of every conscious experience—whether through sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, or mind—that is pleasant, unpleasant, or somewhere in between.

In English we use different words to convey pleasantness or unpleasantness in each of the six senses. If we're relating to a sight, we call vedanā "beautiful,""ugly," or "average." If we are talking about sound, vedanā is "sonorous,""grating," or "uninteresting." If we're describing bodily sensations, vedanā is "pain," "pleasure," or "dullness." That agreeable quality which is common to beauty, melody, and physical pleasure is called *sukha vedanā,* or "pleasant feeling." That disagreeable quality common to ugliness, discordance, and physical pain is called *dukkha vedanā,* or "unpleasant feeling." That which is neither agreeable nor disagreeable is called "neutral feeling."

It is to be remembered that the qualities that we perceive as beautiful, ugly, sonorous, pleasurable, and so on do not reside in the object. Otherwise we would all agree on what was beautiful or pleasurable. The agreeable, disagreeable, and neutral qualities are values that we add to reality through our conditioned mind. Again, *vedanā* means that quality accompanying every conscious experience that you feel as pleasant, unpleasant, or somewhere in between.

When mindfulness is strong and stable, you can investigate vedanā, present and past, without complicating the matter with desire and aversion. When the mind is weak in samādhi and the five hindrances are present, the mind reacts to unpleasant vedanā with aversion and responds to agreeable vedanā with desire. Such reactions stir the mind and distort the truth, in much the same way that winds stir up waves on a lake and distort the images of fish swimming below the surface. This demonstrates yet again the importance of jhāna experience prior to satipaṭṭhāna in order to suppress the five hindrances, especially desire and ill will, in order to have the capability to view the vedanā with complete dispassion.

When the mind is still and free from both desire and aversion, it sees that sukha vedanā (pleasant feeling) is no more than a pause between two moments of dukkha vedanā (unpleasant feeling). Indeed, you can also discern that the intensity of the pleasure in sukha vedanā is directly proportional to the degree of unpleasantness that went just before, and the intensity of the pain in dukkha vedanā is measured by the amount of happiness that you have just lost.

In a chilling book describing imprisonment and torture as a political prisoner in Argentina during the 1970s, an author relates that his most painful experience was not the beatings or the sessions on "Susan" (the name the guards gave to the electric shock torture machine).[5] The worst moment, after endless months of imprisonment, was when his persecutors handed him a letter from his wife. He had blotted out from his mind all memory of the happy years before prison in order to cope with the terror and hopelessness of the present. That letter brought up many warm memories of his wife and family, and made the darkness and agony of his situation even more unbearable. He cursed his wife for sending that letter and screamed deep inside, louder than he ever had under electric shock. As this story graphically illustrates, the intensity of your pain or discontent is proportional to the degree of the happiness that you recall has now vanished.

Vedanā is thus clearly seen to be conditioned, in the same way that night conditions day and day conditions night. It is merely the dualistic play of nature. Vedanā is beyond your control and beyond anyone's control. It is understood to be not mine, not me, not a self. Understanding vedanā in this way through superpower mindfulness, as just vedanā and beyond anyone's control, gives rise to dispassion toward pleasure and pain. You realize with certainty that there can be neither permanent pleasure nor permanent pain. A perfect heavenly world is seen as a sensory impossibility, merely wishful thinking, and an eternal hell is similarly implausible.

Thus the purpose of this second focus of mindfulness is to gain the insight that vedanā is not mine, that pleasure and pain twirl around each other, two inseparable partners on the dance floor of saṃsāra. Craving becomes pointless. And when craving is finally abandoned, there is freedom from pain (and from happiness too).

Mind Contemplation

This third focus of mindfulness, observing the citta or mind consciousness, is one of the most difficult to practice. Most people's meditation is not developed sufficiently to even see mind consciousness. Mind consciousness is like an emperor covered from head to toe in five thick garments: his boots go up to his knees; his trousers go from his waist to his calves; a tunic stretches from his neck to his thighs and along his arms to his wrists; gloves cover his hands and forearms; and a helmet covers all of his head. Being so completely covered, the emperor cannot be seen. In the same way, mind consciousness is so completely clothed by the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch that you cannot see it underneath.

To see the emperor, you have to remove his clothes. In the same way, to see the citta, you have to remove the five external senses. It is the task of the jhāna to remove the five senses and reveal the citta. Thus you cannot even start to practice this third focus of mindfulness until you have experienced a jhāna. For how can you contemplate citta when you haven't really experienced it? It would be like contemplating the emperor when all you can see are his (or *her?*) clothes.

Investigating the nature of citta is also like investigating the nature of gold. Before chemists even begin to test the material, they must ensure that the sample of gold is purified from all other elements and that what they have is 100 percent pure gold. Similarly, before you begin to investigate the nature of citta you have to ensure that this mind consciousness is purified from all other types of consciousness, i.e., that the five external sense-consciousnesses have been abandoned. Again, this can be done only after emerging from a jhāna. Then superpower mindfulness takes the jhāna experience just past, a sustained experience of the citta set apart from the five senses, as its object of investigation. Only in this way will the truth be seen that the citta is anattā, that mind consciousness is subject to arising and passing, that it is neither "me" nor "mine" nor a self, that it is neither God nor cosmic consciousness—that it is just citta, a flame burning because of fuel.

Where the Citta Goes after Enlightenment

A flame depends on fuel. The word for "fuel" in Pāli is *upādāna*. A candle flame depends on heat, wax, and a wick. If any one of those three "fuels" disappears, then the flame ceases. If a wind takes away the heat, the flame ceases. If the wick burns out, the flame ceases. And if the wax is used up, the flame ceases. Once the flame ceases, it doesn't go anywhere. There is no heaven where all good flames go happily to flicker for eternity. Nor does the flame merge with a cosmic, transcendent Flame. It just ceases, that's all. In Pāli the word for a flame "going out" is nibbāna.

The citta too depends on fuel. The suttas say that the citta depends on *nāma-rūpa* (body and objects of mind) and when *nāma-rūpa* ceases, the citta completely ceases (SN 47,42). It goes out. It "nibbānas." It doesn't go anywhere; it just ceases to exist. Interestingly, the two famous bhikkhunīs Kisāgotamī and Paṭācārā became fully enlightened when they saw the flame of a lamp go out (Dhp 275; Thig 116).

When you sustain superpower mindfulness on the pure citta, the nature of all types of consciousness reveals itself. You see consciousness not as a smoothly flowing process but as a series of discrete, isolated events. Consciousness may be compared to a stretch of sand on a beach. Superficially the sand looks continuous over several hundred meters. But after you investigate it closely, you discover that it is made up of discrete, isolated particles of silicate. There are empty spaces between each particle of sand, with no essential sandiness flowing in the gap between any two particles. In the same way, that which we take to be the flow of consciousness is clearly seen to be a series of discrete events, with nothing flowing in between.

Another analogy is the fruit salad analogy. Suppose on a plate there is an apple. You clearly see this apple completely disappear and in its place appears a coconut. Then the coconut vanishes and in its place appears another apple. Then the second apple vanishes and another coconut is there. That vanishes and a banana appears, only to vanish when another coconut manifests on the plate, then another banana, coconut, apple, coconut, mango, coconut, lemon, coconut, and so on. As soon as one fruit vanishes, then a moment later a completely new fruit appears. They are all fruits but completely different varieties, with no two fruits the same. Moreover, no connecting fruit-essence flows from one fruit to the next. In this analogy, the apple stands for an event of eye consciousness, the banana for an incident of nose consciousness, the mango for taste consciousness, the lemon for body consciousness, and the coconut for mind consciousness. Each moment of consciousness is discrete, with nothing flowing from one moment to the next.

Mind consciousness, the "coconut," appears after every other species of consciousness and thereby gives the illusion of sameness to every conscious experience. To the average person, there is a quality in seeing that is also found in hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. We can call that quality "knowing." However, with superpower mindfulness, you will discern that this knowing is not part of seeing, hearing, and so on, but arises a moment after each type of sense consciousness. Moreover, this knowing has vanished when, for example, eye consciousness is occurring. And eye consciousness has vanished when knowing (mind consciousness) is occurring. In the simile of the fruit salad, there can't be an apple and a coconut on the plate at the same time.

Contemplating consciousness in this way—seeing it as a series of discrete, isolated events with no thing continuing from one moment to the next—undermines the illusion that there is a knower, constantly present, which is always there to receive the experience of the world. You are unraveling the last refuge of the illusion of a self. Previously it may have seemed so obvious to you that "I am the one who knows." But what seems obvious is often wrong. Now you see it as just a "knowing," as mind consciousness, like the coconut that is sometimes there and sometimes not. Citta is just a natural phenomenon, subject to ceasing. It cannot be me, mine, or a self. That which knows, citta, is finally understood as anattā.

Satipaṭṭhāna, as noted above, is practiced for the purpose of realizing anattā—no-self. The two last resorts of the illusion of a self or soul are the knower and the doer. If you identify with anything as the essential "you," it will be one or both of these.You assume that you are that which does or that which knows. These two deep-seated, long-held delusions are what stand between you and enlightenment. See through these illusions once, and you are a stream winner. See through these illusions every time, and you are an arahant.

Mind Object Contemplation

Objects of the mind are the last of the four focuses of mindfulness. The mind objects listed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* are the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six senses, the seven enlightenment factors, and the four noble truths. I understand this list to represent examples of mind objects, and therefore other mind objects not mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,* such as thought and emotions, may also be included.

Contemplating the Five Hindrances

As I've explained regarding contemplation of feeling *(vedanā),* the five hindrances must be abandoned before you can effectively contemplate anything. But how can you contemplate the five hindrances after you have abandoned them? As I stated above, mindfulness can take as its object an experience that has already passed. Mindfulness includes memory. So superpower mindfulness can take up, for example, a previous experience of sloth and torpor and hold that past experience still in its strong light long enough to see into its true nature. What you apprehend with superpower mindfulness is that these five hindrances are mere instances of images on the screen, that they are not yours or anything to do with you, as the following simile demonstrates.

An old school friend visited Jamaica many years ago. He went to see a movie in a drive-in theater in a remote town well known for its violence. He was surprised to see that the screen was a two-foot thick reinforced concrete wall. It must have cost a fortune. People of that town, it turns out, were very fond of Westerns. However, whenever the story came to the inevitable gunfight, many members of the audience took out their own guns and joined in the action! If they didn't like the sheriff, they shot at his image on the screen, or they blasted away at the Indians or at whomever else upset them. The owner of the theater could not stop them from joining in the gunfights, and he had replaced so many bullet-riddled canvas screens that he built this indestructible concrete screen. Then his audience could join in the gunfights without ruin.

If, like these moviegoers, you identify images on the screen as real, you will want to shoot them. With mindfulness, however, you will see them as having nothing to do with you. When you see the hindrances merely as images on the screen of consciousness, they will not bother you ever again. You will be free.

Contemplating Thought

Thought, the inner conversation, is an object of the mind that can generate immense suffering. It can manifest as restlessness, remorse, doubt, desire, or ill will. As such, thought is at the heart of the five hindrances. Persistent pessimistic thoughts lead to depression, even suicide. Obsessive fearful thoughts lead to paranoia. It should be obvious that there are great benefits to be won through contemplating thought according to this fourth satipaṭṭhāna.

Again, only superpower mindfulness can see through the con game that is thought. With ordinary mindfulness you tend to believe in the thinking, get caught up in it, even worship it as more truthful than reality. A hungry man goes to dine at an expensive restaurant and is handed the menu. He eats the menu, pays, and leaves. He is still hungry. The menu is not the food any more than thoughts are reality.

Superpower mindfulness sees that thought, at best, is one step removed from reality, and at worst it is completely removed. Ill will bends thought into anger, sensory desire inflates thoughts into lust, and restlessness twists thoughts into frustration. When seen clearly, thoughts can't be trusted. Not even this one!

When satipaṭṭhāna sees thinking for what it truly is, a makeshift approximation, then we experience dispassion with regard to our thinking. The sign of such dispassion and wisdom is that you can let go of thoughts at any time. The proof of such insight is your ability to be silent. In the suttas, a term for an enlightened one is *santamuni,* "silent sage."

Contemplating Will

Another important mind object that I wish to discuss here is "will" *(cetanā),* which comes under the contemplation of the five aggregates *(khandha)* in this fourth satipaṭṭhāna. Will is "that which does," or the doer. As I mentioned above, the will is one of the two last resorts of the illusion of self, along with the knower *(citta)*. Contemplating the will, the doer, and seeing it as anattā is therefore crucial to the experience of enlightenment.

Years ago I was an active member of the Psychic Research Society at Cambridge University. Every year we would invite a professional hypnotist to demonstrate his craft, often to the great amusement of us students. Once the hypnotist put a receptive volunteer student into a deep state of hypnosis. In front of all the students, the hypnotist told him that later in the evening when the hypnotist touched his left ear, the student was to stand up and sing the British national anthem. And later after coming out from the hypnotic trance, when the hypnotist touched his ear the poor student arose and sang "God Save the Queen"! He sang alone, accompanied by great laughter. The most fascinating part of this demonstration was that, when questioned, the student was of the firm opinion that he had freely decided to sing the national anthem and gave some convoluted reason for it. It showed that even brainwashing appears to the brain-washed as free will.

You are deluded to assume that you are reading this of your own free will. My friend, you had no choice but to read this! Will is not the action of a being; it is the end product of a process.

When superpower mindfulness takes a recent experience of jhāna as its object, it sees that will, the "doer," has completely ceased within that state. It has vanished for long periods of time. Contemplating a fully mindful state that is free of will allows you to see that "will," "choice," and the "doer" are not me or mine, not a self. Whatever you do is just a result of complex programming.

When I talk like this, people get frightened. Such fear is a symptom that something you are so attached to, your will, is about to be taken away. We in the West are so attached to the delusion of free will, in fact, that we enshrine the illusion in our constitutions and declarations of human rights.You may raise the objection that if there is no free will, why bother to generate the great effort needed for enlightenment? The answer should be obvious.You put forth great effort because you have no choice!

It is only superpower mindfulness that has the strength to penetrate the barrier of fear erected by attachment and observe the process of will as it truly is. Like the thousand-petaled lotus, when the layer of petals that represent "the doer" fully opens up, you see the unexpected, that there is no one in here doing all this. The will is anattā. Craving begins to unravel at this point.

Contemplating Emotions

The last of the mind objects that I want to discuss here is emotion. Emotion is that texture of mind categorized as depressed or inspired, guilty or forgiving, worried or serene, angry or compassionate, and so on. Emotions toss us around, and this often hurts. Emotions are mind objects, things that appear on the screen of consciousness, and are part of this fourth satipaṭṭhāna.

When I was already a young Buddhist I went to see the movie *West Side Story*. There is a heartbreaking scene at the end when the hero, Tony, runs to his lover, Maria, under a New York City streetlight, is shot, and dies in Maria’s arms. As their doomed relationship is tragically rent, they sing, “There’s a place for us. Somewhere a place for us.” Many in the audience began sobbing uncontrollably. Why did they cry? It was only a movie after all, just the play of light on a cloth screen.

When you are deluded by emotions, you take them to be important, real,“mine.”You can get so sucked in that you seek even unpleasant emotions like sadness repeatedly. Why is it that many people go to a movie with a box of tissues knowing, from the reviews, that it is a tearjerker? It is because they are attached to emotions, delight in them, and identify with them. They don’t want to be free.

Superpower mindfulness focused on emotions uncovers the reality of whether you want to be free or not. It pushes aside your preferences. You recognize that the emotions are seductive sirens beckoning you to their treacherous rocks. But in their essence they are but mind objects, causally conditioned, like weather fronts passing overhead, having nothing to do with you. When you see the truth, you are detached from emotions and free from their tyranny.

Whatever is an object of the mind, whatever appears on the screen of consciousness—whether it be the five hindrances, thought, will, or emotions—can be put under the unremitting and penetrating beam of superpower mindfulness. There you will realize the completely unexpected. You will see what the Buddha saw under the Bodhi tree. The realization will dawn that all these events on the screen of consciousness are just the play of nature, not the play of God, not the play of a soul. There is nothing here. There is “nobody at home.” These mind objects are empty. They are no-self *(anattā)*. The illusion has been seen through. You are now free, unaffected by any mind object.

The Buddha promised that anyone who practices the four satipaṭṭhānas diligently will reach the state of either the nonreturner or full enlightenment in seven days. Perhaps you now understand why many meditators have been disappointed that after many more than seven days they're still not enlightened. As I said earlier, the reason is that they have not been practicing satipaṭṭhāna following the Buddha's instructions. Try it and see. Develop superpower mindfulness generated by jhāna so you know for yourself how impotent ordinary mindfulness is. Put the citta (the knower) or cetanā (the will) under the spotlight of superpower mindfulness, courageously going beyond the comfort of your views. Await the unexpected. Don't second-guess truth. Wait with patience until the thousandth petal of the lotus fully opens to reveal the heart. That will be the end of delusion, the end of saṃsāra, and the end of satipaṭṭhāna.

Part 2

To Bliss and Beyond

9

The Jhānas I: Bliss

IN THE ORIGINAL Buddhist scriptures there is only one word for "meditation" and that is *jhāna*. According to the fully enlightened Ven. Ānanda in the *Gopaka-Moggallāna Sutta* (MN 108,27) the only kind of meditation that the Buddha recommended was jhāna. Thus jhāna designates Buddhist meditation proper, where the meditator's mind is stilled of all thought, secluded from all five-sense activity, and is radiant with otherworldly bliss. Put bluntly, if it isn't jhāna then it isn't true Buddhist meditation! Perhaps this is why the culminating factor of the Buddha's noble eightfold path, the one that defines *right* meditation, is nothing less than the four jhānas.

The Buddha's Discovery

The ancient Buddhist texts state that the Buddha discovered jhāna (SN 2,7; AN IX,42). Not once in the original texts does it say that the Buddha discovered *vipassanā*. These authoritative texts also state that the four jhānas only arise with the appearance of a buddha (SN 45,14-17). The fact that the Buddha discovered jhāna should not be overlooked, for the discovery was a central act in the drama of enlightenment.

When it is said by no less an authority than the arahant Ānanda that the Buddha discovered jhāna, it is not to be understood that no one had ever experienced jhāna before. For instance, in the era of the previous buddha, Kassapa, countless men and women achieved jhāna and subsequently realized enlightenment. But in the India of twenty-six centuries ago, all knowledge of jhāna had disappeared. For example, the famous leader of the Jains and contemporary of the Buddha, Mahāvīra, publicly dismissed jhānas as an impossibility after hearing them described (SN 41,8). Either the most prominent (according to many scholars) religious leader of that time was unbelievably ignorant of common spiritual practices, or else jhāna was indeed an original discovery of the Buddha. The latter is far more plausible, and it is further supported by the observation that there is no mention at all of jhāna in any religious text before the time of the Buddha.

Some might raise the objection that the Buddha's earlier teachers, Alāra Kalāma and Udaka Rāmaputta, taught jhāna because the texts say that they instructed the Bodhisatta (the Buddha-to-be) in the attainment of the state of nothingness and in the attainment of the state of neither perception nor nonperception (MN 26). Although these two attainments are never called jhāna in the early texts (the term *arupa-jhāna* first appears in the much later commentarial literature), it is implicit that they can only be accessed by first proceeding through each of the four jhānas step by step. So did these two early leaders know the four jhānas and teach them to the Bodhisatta?

If they did, then why did the Buddha state that their methods did not lead to nibbāna (MN 26,16) but that jhāna did lead to nibbāna (MN 36,31; 52,4-7; 64,9-12)? And why, when the Bodhisatta abandoned asceticism and asked,"Could there be another path to enlightenment?" (MN 36,30), did he recall the more distant memory of first jhāna as a boy under the rose-apple tree instead of a more recent and intense experience of jhāna under his two early teachers? These questions need to be satisfactorily answered by anyone who still maintains that Alāra Kalāma and Udaka Rāmaputta taught jhāna.

An answer to the question of what these two early teachers taught, one that maintains the Buddha's consistency in rejecting the efficacy of their teachings while praising the efficacy of jhāna (MN 108,27), is that Udaka Rāmaputta and Alāra Kalāma never taught jhāna, and that the two formless attainments that they espoused were not the real thing, most likely diluted versions of the original from the time of the previous Buddha Kassapa. Just as today some teachers present a level of meditation and call it "jhāna" when it is clearly less than the real thing, or some colleges will, for a fee, send a university degree by return mail when the degree is not the real thing, so the attainments taught by Alāra Kalāma and Udaka Rāmaputta could not have been the real thing. The "real thing," the attainment of the sphere of nothingness, *does* lead to enlightenment (MN 52,14), but the different experience of the same name taught by Alāra Kalāma did not.

Another reason why jhāna was unknown before the arising of the Buddha was that the cause of jhāna, the practice of the Middle Way, was also unknown then. Ancient texts such as the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta* (the first sermon, SN 56,11) state that the Buddha discovered the Middle Way and that the Middle Way is synonymous with the noble eightfold path. Another sutta states that the Buddha discovered the noble eightfold path, like a long-lost path to an ancient city (SN 12,65). It should also be noted that the noble eightfold path, the Middle Way, is a gradual path that culminates in jhāna (AN X,103). Thus if one accepts that the Buddha discovered the Middle Way, the noble eightfold path, one must also accept that the Buddha discovered the final stage of the way, the end portion of the path, which is jhāna.

The *Arana-vibhanga Sutta* (MN 139) equates the Middle Way with the pursuit of jhāna. The sutta explains in detail that one should not pursue asceticism nor pleasure of the five senses, but instead one should pursue the Middle Way. If one does not pursue suffering in any of the six senses (asceticism) and one does not pursue pleasure in the five senses *(kāmasukha),* then the only pursuit remaining is for the happiness of the sixth sense (mind), and this must be the Middle Way. This sutta continues with the Buddha encouraging the pursuit of internal happiness, obviously the Middle Way, only here he defines it as the pursuit of the four jhānas. Conclusion: the Middle Way is the pursuit of jhāna.

In the story of the Buddha's awakening, once the Bodhisatta realized that jhāna was the way to enlightenment (MN 36,31), he immediately recognized that it was impractical to attain jhāna with an emaciated body and so began eating well. Seeing this, his first five disciples left him in disgust, thinking he had given up striving (MN 36,32). This indicates that the gentle practices that lead to tranquillity of the body and then on to jhāna were not recognized before the arising of the Buddha as a valid path by learned seekers such as these five disciples. When the path to jhāna was not widely recognized as worthwhile, it is no wonder that the path was not pursued and jhāna was not achieved. It should also now be clear why the first part of the first sermon of the newly awakened Buddha was the teaching of the Middle Way, the noble eightfold path, that opens the way to jhāna and the enlightenment beyond.

I have written at length on this point, citing many original texts, because it is a new idea to the West. What is groundbreaking is bound to be controversial. I ask all sincere readers to put aside their existing views for a while, since the Buddha said that attachment to views can be an obstacle to insight, and fairly consider the evidence presented here. After all, the *Pancālacando Sutta* (SN 2,7) is certainly an original sutta, because it is referred to elsewhere in the canon (AN IX,42) and was thus confirmed as authentic Dhamma by the five hundred arahants at the First Council—and it states that the Buddha discovered jhāna.

Can One Be Attached to Jhāna?

When the Bodhisatta had the insight that jhāna was the way to enlightenment, he then thought, "Why am I afraid of that pleasure which has nothing to do with the five senses nor with unwholesome things? I will not be afraid of that pleasure [of jhāna]!" (MN 36,32). Even today, some meditators mistakenly believe that something as intensely pleasurable as jhāna cannot be conducive to the end of all suffering, and they remain afraid of jhāna. However, in the suttas the Buddha repeatedly stated that the pleasure of the jhāna "is to be followed, is to be developed, and is to be encouraged. It is not to be feared" (MN 66,21).

In spite of this clear advice from the Buddha himself, some students of meditation are misled by those who discourage jhāna on the grounds that one can become so attached to jhāna that one never becomes enlightened. It should be pointed out that the Buddha's word for attachment, *upādāna,* refers only to attachment to the comfort and pleasure of the five-sense world or to attachment to various forms of wrong view (such as a view of a self). It never means attachment to wholesome things like jhāna.[6]

Simply put, jhāna states are stages of letting go. One cannot be attached to letting go, just as one cannot be imprisoned by freedom. One can indulge in jhāna, in the bliss of letting go, and this is what some people are misled into fearing. But in the *Pāsādika Sutta* (DN 29,25), the Buddha said that one who indulges in the pleasure of jhāna may expect only one of four consequences: stream winning, once-returning, nonreturning, or full enlightenment! In other words, indulging in jhāna leads only to the four stages of enlightenment. Thus, in the words of the Buddha, "One should not fear jhāna."

For some meditators, the jhānas seem far from their experience and thus irrelevant. This is not so. Discussing such sublime states can create inspiration, as well as map out the territory ahead. More crucially, discussion informs one about what to do when one draws close to any of these profound states of freedom. Finally, it gives a deeper understanding of the Dhamma, especially into the third noble truth, the cessation of all suffering. This is because the rapture and bliss of jhāna is directly related to the amount of saṃsāra that is abandoned, albeit temporarily. Thus, discussing the jhānas is well worthwhile, even if they may seem distant.

Some readers may have already gotten close enough to be able to understand this discussion from their own experience, and it may help them make that last leap into the jhānas. Furthermore, when meditators experience a profound state of meditation, they want to find out exactly what it was, to recognize the state in terms of the Buddha's descriptions. So it is important to be able to correctly identify the levels of depth in meditation.

It is also important to generate some inspiration in one's achievement. Such a positive emotion will encourage further letting go. It is my intention to show you how wonderful and profound these states of jhāna are, and to illustrate how crucial their experience is to the event of enlightenment.

Eventually, the seeds that are planted in you through reading a discussion on jhāna will someday bear fruit. At the right time, the mind will know automatically what it must do. For example, when nimittas arise, the mind will spontaneously know how to respond. Then sometime later you might reflect,"Where did that response come from?" The answer is that it came from reading discussions such as this. Sometimes it comes from what one has learned in a past life!

So please do not think that just because you have not yet reached the jhānas this discussion is of no use to you. In fact it will be very useful. You will realize this when, having achieved one of the jhānas, you recognize that such instructions as given here came to your help just at the right time.

The Beautiful Breath:

The Beginning of the Journey into Jhānas

Having discussed the jhānas from a historical and theoretical point of view, I will now explain the jhānas in terms of their practice. It is best to begin the description of the journey into jhāna from the starting point of the beautiful breath. Before this stage is accomplished, the mind has insufficient contentment, awareness, or stability to launch itself into the higher states of consciousness. But when you are able to maintain an effortless awareness on the breath without a break for long periods of time, when the mind has settled into such a rich awareness that the breath appears delightful, then you are ready to set off on the journey into jhāna.

Do not fear delight in meditation. Happiness in meditation is important! Moreover, you deserve to bliss out. Blissing out on the breath is an essential part of the path. So when delight does arise alongside the breath, cherish and guard it like a valuable treasure.

The delight that arises at the stage of the beautiful breath is the glue that holds the mind's attention onto the breath. It results in the mindfulness staying with the breath without effort. One stays with full attention on the breath because the mind enjoys watching the breath and doesn't want to go anywhere else. It remains with the breath automatically, and all wandering ceases.

Without the experience of delight, there will be some discontent. And discontent is the source of the wandering mind. Before one reaches the stage of the beautiful breath, discontent pushes mindfulness away from the breath. Then the only way to keep mindfulness upon the breath is through an effort of will, through control. But when the stage of the beautiful breath is achieved, when delight generates long-lasting contentment, then the mind will not wander. Control can be relaxed, effort relieved, and the mind remains motionless, naturally.

Just as gasoline is the fuel that propels a car, so discontent is the fuel that moves the mind. When a car runs out of gas, it gently rolls to a stop. One doesn't need to use the brake. In the same way, when the mind runs out of discontent, through the arising of the beautiful breath, it gently comes to a stop. One doesn't need to use the brake of willpower. The mind comes to a state of stillness quite naturally.

Pīti-sukha—Joy and Happiness

In Pāli, the compound word *pīti-sukha* means the combination of joy with happiness. One can use those words for many kinds of experiences, even worldly ones. But in meditation, pīti-sukha refers only to that joy and happiness that is generated through letting go.

Just as various types of fire can be distinguished by their fuel, such as a wood fire, oil fire, or bushfire, so can the various types of happiness be differentiated by their cause. The joy and happiness that arises with the beautiful breath is fueled by the letting go of the burdens of past and future, internal commentary, and diversity of consciousness. Because it is a delight born of letting go, it cannot produce attachment. One cannot be attached and let go at the same time. The delight that arises with the beautiful breath is, in fact, a clear sign that some detachment has taken place.

Pīti-sukha may arise from sensual excitement, from personal achievement, or from letting go. These three types of happiness differ in their nature. The happiness generated by sensual excitement is hot and stimulating but also agitated and therefore tiring. Repetition makes it fade. The happiness caused by personal achievement is warm and fulfilling but also fades quickly, leaving a vacant hole. But the happiness born of letting go is cool and long-lasting. It is associated with the sense of real freedom.

Moreover, the happiness generated by sensual excitement produces ever-stronger desires, making the happiness unstable and tyrannical. The happiness caused by personal achievement produces more investment in being a control freak and encourages the illusion of personal power. The controller then kills any happiness. The happiness born of letting go inspires more letting go and less interference. Because it encourages one to leave things alone, it is stable and effortless. It is the happiness most independent of causes and closest to the unconditioned, the uncaused.

It is important for success in meditation to recognize the different types of happiness. If the happiness that arises with awareness of the breath is of the sensual excitement type—for example, waves of physical pleasure coursing through your body—it will soon disappear when effort is relaxed, leaving you heavy and tired. If the happiness is associated with the sense of achievement—“Wow! At last I’m getting somewhere in my meditation”—it will often disintegrate, destroyed by the arousal of the controller, ruined by the interfering ego. But if the happiness that arises with the beautiful breath is that born of letting go, then you feel that you don’t need to say anything or do anything. It becomes the happiness whose brother is freedom and whose sister is peace. It will grow all by itself in magnificent intensity, blossoming like a flower in the garden of jhāna.

In addition to the beautiful breath, there are many other objects of meditation: loving-kindness *(mettā),* parts of the body *(kāyagatāsati),* simple visualizations *(kasiṇa),* and others. However, in all meditation that develops into jhāna there must come a stage where the pīti-sukha born of letting go arises. For example, loving-kindness meditation opens into a wonderful, gorgeous, unconditional love for the whole cosmos, filling the meditator with delicious joy. Pīti-sukha born of letting go has arisen, and one is at the stage of "beautiful mettā." Some meditators focus on parts of the human body, often a skull. As the meditation deepens, as mindfulness rests on the inner image of a skull, an amazing process unfolds. The image of the skull in one's mind starts to whiten, then deepen in color, until it appears to glow with intense luminosity as the "beautiful skull." Again, pīti-sukha born of letting go has appeared, filling the whole experience with joy and happiness. Even some monks who practice *asubha* (loathsomeness) meditation, on a decaying corpse, for instance, can experience the initially repugnant cadaver suddenly changing into one of the most beautiful images of all. Letting go has aroused so much happiness that it overwhelms the natural disgust and floods the image with pīti-sukha. One has realized the stage of the "beautiful corpse."

In meditation on the breath, the Lord Buddha taught the arousing of pīti-sukha along with the experience of one's breath as the fifth and sixth steps of the sixteen-step ānāpānasati method. I dealt with this crucial stage of meditation at length above.[7]

When pīti-sukha doesn't arise, it must be because there is not enough contentment, that is, *one is still trying too hard*. One should reflect on the first two of the five hindrances. The first hindrance, sensory desire, draws the attention toward the object of desire and thus away from the breath. The second hindrance, ill will, finds fault with the experience of breath, and the dissatisfaction repels the attention from the breath. Contentment is the "middle way" between desire and ill will. It keeps one's mindfulness with the breath long enough for pīti-sukha to arise.

The Way into Stillness

Stillness means lack of movement. Since will causes the mind to move, to experience stillness one must remove all will, all doing, all control. If you grasp a leaf on a tree and try your hardest to hold it still, no matter how hard you try, you will never succeed. There will always be some vibration caused by slight tremors in your muscles. However, if you don't touch the leaf and just protect it from the breeze, then the leaf comes to a natural state of stillness. In exactly the same way, you cannot achieve stillness by holding the mind in the grip of the will. But if you remove the cause of movement in the mind, the will, the mind soon becomes still.

Thus one cannot *will* the mind to be still. The way into stillness is through the pīti-sukha born of letting go. Once the delight that comes with the beautiful breath appears, then the will becomes redundant. It becomes unnecessary since mindfulness stays with the breath all by itself, effortlessly. Mindfulness enjoys being with the beautiful breath, and so does not need to be forced.

When stillness appears it enriches the pīti-sukha. The deepening of pīti-sukha, in turn, creates even less opportunity for effort, and so stillness grows stronger. A self-reinforcing feedback process ensues. Stillness deepens pīti-sukha, and pīti-sukha increases the stillness. This process continues, when not interrupted, all the way into jhāna, where stillness is profound and pīti-sukha ecstatic.

In this chapter I have explored some of the issues often raised about the jhānas. The next chapter, on the nimitta, takes us farther down the road to the deep absorptions.

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The Jhānas II: Bliss upon Bliss

The Nimitta: The Home Stretch into Jhāna

WHEN THE BREATH DISAPPEARS and delight fills the mind, the nimitta usually appears. I briefly discussed nimittas and their characteristics in chapter 2; here I discuss them in greater depth. *Nimitta,* in this context, refers to beautiful "lights" that appear in the mind. I would point out, though, that the nimittas are not visual objects, in that they are not seen through the sense of sight. At this stage of the meditation, the sense of sight is not operating. The nimittas are pure mental objects, known by the mind sense. However, they are commonly perceived as lights.

What is happening here is that perception struggles to interpret such a pure mental phenomenon. Perception is that function of mind that interprets experience in terms we can understand. Perception relies crucially on comparison, interpreting new experience as similar to previous experience. However, pure mental phenomena are so rarely visited that perception has great difficulty finding anything at all comparable to these new experiences. This is why nimittas appear strange, like nothing one has ever experienced before. But the phenomena in the catalogue of one's past experiences that come closest to these nimittas are simple visual lights, such as a car headlight, a flashlight in the dark, or a full moon in the night sky. Perception adopts this close but imperfect comparison and interprets the nimittas as lights.

It was for me a fascinating discovery to realize that everyone who experiences these nimittas experiences exactly the same thing! It is only that meditators interpret the experience in many different ways. Some see the nimitta as a pure white light, others see it as golden, some as deep blue. Some see it as a circle, others as an oblong; some see it as sharp edged, others as fuzzy edged. There is indeed no end to the features of nimittas that meditators describe. The important thing to know is that color, shape, and so on are irrelevant. Perception colors the nimitta and gives it shape just so one can make sense of it.

When the Nimitta Comes Too Early

Sometimes a "light" can appear in the mind at a very early stage of the meditation. For all except accomplished meditators, however, such intruders are highly unstable. If one focuses one's attention on them, one will not get anywhere. It is not the right time for nimitta. It is best to regard them as distractions and go back to the main task of the early stage out of which they came.

There is more uncertainty what to do when a nimitta appears at the stage of the beautiful breath when the breath has yet to be calmed close to disappearance. Again, the nimitta appears intrusive. It interferes with the main task of sustaining one's awareness on the beautiful breath. If one deliberately turns from the breath to the nimitta, it usually doesn't remain long. The mind is not sufficiently refined to hold a subtle nimitta. One needs additional practice on the breath. So the best thing to do is to ignore the nimitta and train all one's attention on the beautiful breath.

Often, after one has followed this advice, the nimitta comes back, stronger and brighter. Ignore it again. When it returns a third time, even more powerful and radiant, go back to the breath. Practicing this way, eventually a very powerful and brilliant nimitta will break into your awareness. You can go with that one. Actually, it is almost impossible to ignore. That one usually takes you into jhāna.

The above can be compared to a visitor knocking on your door. It could be just a salesman, so you ignore his knocking and go on with your own business. Often, that's the end of the matter. Sometimes, though, the visitor knocks again, louder and longer. You ignore him a second time. Then after a few moments' silence, he bangs even louder and more vigorously. This persistence suggests that that the visitor must be a good friend of yours, so you open the door, let him in, and have a great time together.

Another method of dealing with an early nimitta that arises at the stage of the beautiful breath is to incorporate the nimitta into the middle of the breath. One trains to visualize the situation as similar to a jewel being held in the center of lotus petals. The shimmering jewel is the nimitta, the lotus petals represent the beautiful breath. If the mind isn't quite ready to stay with the nimitta, it still has the breath to anchor it. Sometimes, the mind is so unprepared that the breath appears to close in on the nimitta, and as a result the nimitta disappears leaving only the beautiful breath. This step backward does not disturb the meditation. At other times, the mind is well prepared for the nimitta, and the nimitta strengthens and expands, pushing out the breath, which disappears beyond the edges of one's awareness, leaving only the nimitta. This method is skillful because it doesn't involve moving the mind from one thing to another—a coarse movement that disturbs the meditation significantly. Instead, one just passively observes the transition from the beautiful breath to the nimitta, and maybe back again, allowing the process to develop or recede according to nature, not according to one's desire.

Although the following advice is for accomplished meditators only, by which I mean those with plentiful experience of jhāna already, it is included here for the sake of completeness. When one is skillful in entering into jhāna and one has experienced a jhāna recently, the mind is so still and powerful, even before one begins to meditate, that one may skip many stages. So much so that one may arouse the nimitta almost immediately after starting. The mind, being so used to nimittas and so favorably disposed toward them, literally leaps onto the nimitta and the nimitta stays. Soon jhāna is reached. For such accomplished meditators, the earlier the nimitta arises, the better.

When the Nimitta Does Not Appear

For some, when the breath disappears, the nimitta doesn't happen. No lights appear in their mind. Instead, they are left with a deep feeling of peace, of emptiness, of nothing. This can be a very beneficial state and should not be belittled, but it is not jhāna. Moreover, it lacks the power to proceed any further. It is a cul-de-sac, and a refined one at that, but it is incapable of being developed further. There are a number of methods to bypass this state, generate the causes for nimitta, and go deeper into the jhānas.

The state above arises because one did not cultivate sufficient pītisukha along with the breath. There was not enough delight when the breath disappeared, so mindfulness had no clear mental object of beauty on which to settle. Understanding this, one needs to put more value on developing delight when one is watching the breath, and cultivating that delight until it becomes a strong sense of beauty. For example, you may regard the breath as an old and well-loved friend with whom you have shared such wonderful times. Remembering those happy moments brings you joy, and that joy lets you look on the breath as beautiful. Whatever skillful means one employs, by paying careful attention to the beauty alongside the breath, the beauty will blossom. What one pays attention to usually grows.

In the previous chapter, one was cautioned not to be afraid to delight in meditation. I regard this exhortation as so important that I repeat it here almost word for word: Do not be afraid to delight in meditation. Too many meditators dismiss happiness, thinking it unimportant or believing that they don't deserve such delight. Happiness in meditation is important, and you deserve to bliss out! Blissing out on the meditation object is an essential part of the path. So when delight does arise alongside the breath, you should cherish it and guard it accordingly.

Another reason for the nimitta not arising is that one hasn't invested enough energy into the knower. As explained in the previous chapter, delight is generated by letting energy flow into the knower. Usually, most of our mental energy gets lost in the doing, that is, in planning and remembering, controlling and thinking. If one would only redirect one's energy away from the doer and give it all to the knower, to attentiveness, then one's mind would become brightened and energized with delight. When there is lots of delight, strong pīti-sukha, then after the breath disappears the nimitta appears. So maybe the reason why a nimitta doesn't appear is that one has devoted too much energy to controlling and not enough to knowing.

However, if the breath has disappeared but still no nimitta arises, then one must be careful not to fall into discontent. Discontent will wither any pīti-sukha already there and will urge the mind into restlessness. Thus discontent will make the arising of a nimitta even more unlikely. So one must be patient and seek the remedy in becoming aware of contentment and letting it consolidate. Just through paying attention to contentment, it usually deepens. As contentment grows stronger, delight will arise. As delight grows in power, the nimitta appears.

Another useful method to arouse the nimitta when the breath disappears is to focus more sharply in the present moment. Present-moment awareness is the very first stage of this method of meditation. It should have been established at the beginning. But in practice, as the meditation progresses and one pays attention to other things, the present-moment awareness can become a little sloppy. It may be that one's mindfulness has become smeared around the present moment instead of being precisely focused. By noticing this as a problem, it is very easy to adjust the focus of mindfulness to be knife-edged in the center of now. Like adjusting the lens of a telescope, the slightly blurred image becomes very sharp. When the attention is sharply focused in the present moment, it experiences more power. Pīti-sukha comes with the sharpening of focus, and the nimitta soon follows as well.

Suitable Nimitta and Useless Nimitta

It is very helpful to cultivate nimittas of the sort perceived as a light. These "light nimittas" are the best vehicle for transporting the meditator into the jhānas. However, it is just possible, but rarely done, to enter a jhāna by using "feeling nimittas" instead. By this I mean that one sees no light in the mind but instead experiences a feeling of bliss in the mind. It is important to note that the sense of touch (the last of the five senses) has been transcended and such a feeling of bliss is experienced completely by the mind sense. It is a pure mental object again, but perceived as relating closely to a physical feeling of bliss. This is a bona fide nimitta. But it is much more difficult to work with such a nimitta to gain access into jhāna, though it is not impossible. For these reasons, it is recommended to cultivate the light nimitta if one aspires for the jhāna.

There are some visual nimittas that are of no use on the path into jhāna. It is helpful to identify these "useless" nimittas so that one will waste no time with them.

Sometimes whole scenes can appear clearly in the mind. There might be landscapes, buildings, and people, familiar or strange. Such visions might be fascinating to watch, but they are of little use. Moreover, they are meaningless, and one should certainly not mistake them as some revelation of truth. Experience shows that visions arising at this stage are notoriously deceptive and completely untrustworthy. If one likes to waste time, one can linger on them a while. But the recommended thing to do is to remove all interest and go back to the beautiful breath. Such complex nimittas are merely a reflection of an overcomplicated mind. The mind should have been calmed into simplicity much more effectively before letting go of the breath. When one sustains the attention on the beautiful breath, uninterrupted for long periods of time, then one is training in simplicity. Then when the breath disappears, a simple unified nimitta arises, one that is suitable for progress.

A less elaborate nimitta, which is still overcomplicated, can be called the "firework nimitta." As the name suggests, this consists of many bursts of light coming and going, never lasting very long and exhibiting much movement. There may be several bursts of light at the same time, even of different colors. Again, this firework nimitta is a sign that the mind is still too complicated and very unstable. If one wants, one can enjoy the sideshow for a short time, but one should not waste too much time there. One should ignore all its razzle-dazzle, return to the breath, and develop more one-pointedness and calm.

The next type of nimitta can be called the "shy nimitta," a single pure light that flashes up quickly and then disappears. After a few moments, it flashes up again. Each time, it lasts only a second or two. Such a nimitta is much more encouraging. Its simplicity shows that the mind is one-pointed. Its power is a sign that pīti-sukha is strong. But its inability to remain after breaking through into consciousness shows that the level of calm is not quite enough. In such a situation, one need not return immediately to the beautiful breath. Instead, one patiently waits, developing more calm, allowing the mind to become more receptive to the very shy nimitta. As will be explained later at greater length, this nimitta disappears because the mind overreacts to its arrival, usually with excitement or fear. By establishing a solid calm and having the confidence to not react at all, the shy nimitta returns and stays longer each time. Soon such a nimitta loses its shyness and, feeling accepted within the mind's calmness, remains a long time. One should attempt this approach first. But if the nimitta continues being shy and shows no sign of remaining longer, then one should return to the beautiful breath and ignore it. When one has built more tranquillity of mind with the beautiful breath, then one can return to the shy nimitta to see if it will establish itself this time.

Another type of nimitta is the "point nimitta," a simple and powerful light but ever so small, which persists many seconds. This nimitta can be very useful. It shows that one-pointedness is excellent, calm is sufficient, but pīti-sukha is still a bit lacking. All one needs to do is gently look deeper into the point nimitta, letting mindfulness zero in. Then it appears as if one's awareness comes closer to this nimitta and its size starts to increase. As it expands a little, one should keep one's focus on the center, not on the edges or beyond the edges. By maintaining the mind's focus sharply on the center of the point nimitta, it increases in power and grows in pīti-sukha. Soon the point nimitta unfolds into the best nimitta of all.

The best nimitta, the one most suitable for jhāna, begins by resembling the full moon at midnight in a sky free of clouds. It rises unhurried when the beautiful breath softly disappears. It takes three or four seconds to establish its presence and settle down, remaining still and very beautiful before the mind's eye. As it remains without effort it grows brighter, more luminous. Soon it appears brighter than the sun at midday, radiating bliss. It becomes by far the most beautiful thing one has ever seen. Its beauty and power will often feel unbearable. One wonders whether one can take so much bliss of such extreme power. But one can. There's no limit to the bliss one can feel. Then the nimitta explodes, drowning one in even more bliss, or one dives into the center of the radiating ecstasy. If one remains there, it is jhāna.

Shining Up the Nimitta

In chapter 7, I first introduced the simile of the mirror. It is a far-reaching insight to realize that this nimitta is actually an image of one's mind. Just as one sees an image of one's face when one looks in a mirror, one sees an image of one's mind in the profound stillness of this meditation stage.

So when the nimitta appears dull, or even dirty, it means that one's mind is dull, even dirty! Usually, this is because one has been lacking in virtue recently; possibly one was angry, or maybe self-centered. At this stage of meditation, one is looking directly at one's mind and there is no opportunity for deceit. One always sees the mind as it truly is. So, if one's nimitta appears dull and stained, then one should clean up one's act in daily life. One should take moral precepts, speak only kindly, practice more generosity, and be selfless in service. This stage of meditation when nimittas appear makes it abundantly clear that virtue is an essential ingredient for success in meditation.

Having taught many meditation retreats over the years, I have noticed that the meditators who have the easiest progress and most sensational results are those who we would call purehearted. They are the people who are joyously generous, whose nature would never allow them to harm another being, who are soft-spoken, gentle, and very happy. Their beautiful lifestyle gives them a beautiful mind. And their beautiful mind supports their virtuous lifestyle. Then, when they reach this stage of the meditation and their mind is revealed in the image of a nimitta, it is so brilliant and pure that it leads them easily to jhāna. It demonstrates that one cannot lead a heedless and self-indulgent lifestyle and have easy success in one's meditation. On the other hand, purifying one's conduct and developing compassion prepare the mind for meditation. The best remedy, then, for shining up a dull or dirty nimitta is to purify one's conduct outside the meditation.

That being said, if one's conduct in daily life isn't too outrageous, one can shine up the dirty nimitta in the meditation itself. This is achieved by focusing the attention on the center of the nimitta. Most areas of the nimitta may appear dull, but the very center of the nimitta is always the brightest and purest part. It is the soft center of an otherwise stiff and unworkable nimitta. As one focuses on the center, it expands like a balloon to produce a second nimitta, purer and brighter. One looks into the very center of this second nimitta, the spot where it is the brightest of all, and that balloons into a third nimitta, even purer and brighter. Gazing into the center effectively shines up the nimitta. One continues in this way until the nimitta is beautifully brilliant.

When, in life, one has developed a strong fault-finding mind, obsessively picking out what's wrong in this and that, then one will find it almost impossible to pick out the beautiful center of a dull nimitta and focus attention thereon. One has become so conditioned to pick out the blemishes in things that it goes against the grain to ignore all the dull and dirty areas of a nimitta to focus exclusively on the beautiful center. This demonstrates once again how unskillful attitudes in life can prevent success in deep meditation. When one develops a more forgiving attitude to life, when one becomes more embracing of the duality of good and bad—not being a negative obsessive nor a positive excessive but a balanced acceptive—then not only can one see the beauty in mistakes, but one can also see the beautiful center in a dull and dirty nimitta.

It is essential to have a bright and luminous nimitta to take one through to jhāna. A dull and dirty one is like an old, beat-up car that will break down on the journey. The dull nimitta, when not made to shine, usually vanishes after some time. So if one is unable to shine up the nimitta, then go back to the beautiful breath and build up more energy there. Generate greater pīti-sukha, huge happiness and joy, along with the breath. Then, next time the breath disappears and a nimitta arises, it will be not dull but beautiful and luminous. In effect, one has shined up the nimitta in the stage of the beautiful breath.

When the nimitta is very bright, it is also very beautiful. It usually appears unearthly in the depth of its beauty and more wonderful than anything one has ever experienced before. Whatever the color of the nimitta, it is a thousand times richer than anything that can be seen with one's own eyes. Such awesome beauty will captivate one's attention, making the nimitta remain. The more beautiful the nimitta, the more likely it is that the nimitta will become stable and not jump about. Thus one of the best methods to stabilize the nimitta, so that it persists a long time, is to shine the nimitta into brilliance, as explained above.

However, some brilliant nimittas still don't last long. They burst into the mental field of awareness with strong pīti-sukha, but they persist not much longer than a glorious shooting star in a clear night sky. These nimittas have power but lack sufficient stability. In order to stabilize such a nimitta, it is important to know that the two enemies that disperse the nimitta are fear and excitement.

Of the two enemies, fear is more common. These nimittas appear so immense in their sheer power and beauty that one often becomes very afraid. Fear is a natural response to the recognition of something much more powerful than oneself. Moreover, the experience is so unfamiliar that one's personal security looks seriously threatened. It seems as if one might lose all control. And one will—blissfully so—if one could only let go of the "self" and trust in the nimitta! Then one would experience desire and control overwhelmed by supramundane bliss, and, in consequence, much of what one took to be one's self would vanish, leaving a real sense of freedom. It is the fear of losing part of one's ego that is the root cause of alarm when a powerful nimitta appears.

Those who have understood something of the Buddha's teaching of anattā, that there is no self, will have an easier time transcending this fear and accepting the nimitta. They realize that they have nothing to protect and so can let go of control, trust in the emptiness, and selflessly enjoy the beauty and power. Thus the nimitta settles. Even an intellectual understanding that there is no one in here will help overcome the terror of letting go of the innermost controller. However, those who have no appreciation of the truth of no-self may overcome this fear by substituting the more powerful perception of bliss.

The simile of a child in a swimming pool illustrates this last point. When children who have just learned to walk see a swimming pool for the first time, they are likely to be scared. The unfamiliar environment threatens their security, and they are deeply concerned whether their little bodies can manage in such an unsolid material. They are afraid of losing control. So they put one toe into the water and quickly pull it out. That felt all right. So they place three toes into the water for just a little bit longer. That was okay too. Next they dip a whole foot in, then a whole leg. As the confidence increases and the swimming pool promises to be fun, the anticipation of joy overpowers the fear. The child jumps into the water and immerses itself fully. Then they have such a great time that their parents can hardly get them to leave!

Similarly, when fear arises with the powerful nimitta, it is all one can do to stay there just for an instant. One then reflects how that felt. To say it felt wonderful is an understatement. So the next time one stays longer, and it feels even better. By this gradual method, confidence soon becomes strong and the expectation of joy so dominant that when the awesome nimitta arises, one jumps right in and immerses oneself fully. Moreover, one has such a great time that it is only with great difficulty that anyone can make you come out.

Another skillful means for overcoming fear at this stage, especially when fear is not too strong, is to perform a little mental ceremony of handing over trust. It is as if one has been the driver of one's meditation until now, but this is the moment to hand over control to the nimitta. As I suggested in chapter 7, one may imagine handing over a set of keys to the powerful nimitta, the way one allows a trusted friend to take over driving one's car. With an imaginary gesture of handing over the keys, one transfers control and places full trust in the nimitta. Such a transfer of faith usually leads to a greater stability of the nimitta and its subsequent deepening.

Here again one is placing faith in the knower and withdrawing it from the doer. This is the theme underlying the whole of the meditation path. One trains from the very beginning in passive awareness, that is, the ability to be clearly aware without interfering at all with the object of awareness. Energy, coupled with faith, flows into the mindfulness and away from activity. When one learns to watch an ordinary object like the breath without meddling, then one's passive awareness will be challenged by a more seductive object like the beautiful breath. If one passes this test, then the most challenging object of all, the nimitta, will be presented to you as the ultimate test of passive awareness. For if one gets involved with the nimitta and tries to control it however slightly, then one fails the final examination and gets sent back to the beautiful breath for remedial training. The more one meditates, the more one learns to be powerfully mindful while letting go of all doing. When this skill is fully perfected, it is easy to pass the final test and stabilize the nimitta with flawless passive awareness.

Again, the simile of the mirror is applicable here. When you look at your reflection in a mirror and the image is moving around, it is because you are not still. It is futile to try to stabilize the image by holding the mirror still. In fact, if you try this, the reflection is apt to move even more. The image in the mirror is moving because the watcher is moving, not the mirror. Only when the watcher is still will the image be still.

The nimitta is in reality a reflection of the mind, an image of that which knows. When this reflection, this nimitta, moves back and forth, it is futile trying to stabilize the nimitta by holding the nimitta still. The nimitta is moving because that which is watching the nimitta is moving. When this is understood, one focuses on that which knows, letting it come to stillness. When that which knows doesn't move, then neither does the nimitta.

The other enemy of the nimitta's stability is excitement or exhilaration, what I have called the "wow!" response. When there is success in the meditation and amazing things happen, then the meditator can get very excited, especially when a wonderful nimitta first appears, more radiant than the sun and more beautiful than exquisite flowers! On such occasions it is common for the mind to say "wow!" Unfortunately, the nimitta immediately withdraws and may be reluctant to return for a very long time, even months. In order to avoid such a calamity, one should bear in mind Ajahn Chah's famous simile of the still forest pool, which I described in detail in chapter 7.

In this simile the forest pool represents the mind, and the forest monk sitting near its edge stands for mindfulness. When mindfulness is still, then animals like the beautiful breath and pīti-sukha come out from their jungle to play by the mind's edge. Mindfulness must remain still. If it does, then, after the beautiful breath and pīti-sukha have finished their business in the mind, the beautiful, shy nimitta will cautiously emerge to play in the mind. If the nimitta senses the knower thinking "wow!" it will bashfully run back into the jungle, not to reemerge for a very long time.

So when the powerful and beautiful nimittas appear, watch with the stillness of an Ajahn Chah, sitting absolutely motionless by the remote forest lake. Then one will watch this strange and wonderful nimitta make merry in the mind for a very long time, until it is ready to take one into jhāna.

Entering the Jhāna

When the nimitta is stable and radiant, then one is at the entrance to jhāna. One must train oneself to wait patiently here, maintaining the stillness and nondoing until the causes or conditions are ready for the transition into jhāna. At this stage, however, some meditators make the mistake of disturbing the process by peeking at the edge of the nimitta.

Once the nimitta is stable and bright, one might become interested in its shape or size. Is it circular or oblong? Are the edges precise or ill defined? Is it small or is it big? When one looks at the edge, mindfulness loses its one-pointedness. The edge is the place of duality, of inside and outside. And duality is the opposite of one-pointedness. If one looks at the edge, the nimitta will become unsettled and may even disappear. One should keep mindfulness on the very center of the nimitta, away from the edge, until any perception of edge vanishes into the nonduality of one-pointedness. Similarly, if one attempts to expand or contract the nimitta, then one will also be sacrificing the essential one-pointedness. Expansion and contraction involve the perception of size, and that involves awareness of the edge of the nimitta and the space that lies beyond. Again one is falling back into the trap of duality and loss of one-pointedness through this unprofitable expanding and contracting.

So when the nimitta is stable and bright, you must be patient. Don’t move. One is building up the jhāna factors of pīti-sukha and one-pointedness. When they are built to sufficient power, they will unfold into jhāna by themselves.

An oft-quoted passage from the suttas, often erroneously translated to imply the existence of an original mind, is relevant here. The passage is from the Aṅguttara Nikāya.[8]

> This mind, O monks, is luminous, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements. The uninstructed worldling does not understand this as it really is; therefore for him there is no mental development.
>
> This mind, O monks, is luminous, and it is freed from adventitious defilements. The instructed noble disciple understands this as it really is; therefore for him there is mental development. (AN I,6,1-2)

At the stage of the beautiful and stable nimitta, it is the nimitta that is radiant and incredibly luminous. And the nimitta, as already explained, is an image of the mind. When one experiences such a nimitta, one recognizes it as the luminous (or radiant) mind of the Aṅguttara passage above. This nimitta is radiant because the mind has been freed from the “adventitious defilements,” which mean the five hindrances. Then one understands that this nimitta—this luminous mind freed of the five hindrances—is the doorway into jhāna, then one truly understands what is meant by “mental development.”

When the nimitta is radiant and stable, then its energy builds up moment by moment. It is like adding peace upon peace upon peace, until the peace becomes huge! As the peace becomes huge, the pītisukha becomes huge, and the nimitta grows in luminosity. If one can maintain the one-pointedness here by keeping one’s focus on the very center of the nimitta, the power will reach a critical level. One will feel as if the knower is being drawn into the nimitta, that one is falling into the most glorious bliss. Alternatively, one may feel that the nimitta approaches until it envelops the knower, swallowing one up in cosmic ecstasy. One is entering jhāna.

Yo-Yo Jhāna

It sometimes happens that when inexperienced meditators fall into a nimitta, they immediately bounce back to where they began. I call this a "yo-yo jhāna," after the children's toy. It isn't a real jhāna because it doesn't last long enough, but it is so close. It is the enemy I identified above, excitement, that causes mindfulness to bounce back from jhāna. Such a reaction is quite understandable since the bliss that one experiences when falling into the nimitta is greater joy than one can ever imagine. One may have thought that the best sexual orgasm was something nice, but now one discovers that it is trivial compared to the bliss of these jhānas. Even after a yo-yo jhāna, one often bursts into tears of happiness, crying at the most wonderful experience by far of one's whole life. So it is understandable that novice meditators first experience yo-yo jhānas. After all, it takes a lot of training to be able to handle such immensely strong bliss. And it takes a lot of wisdom to let go of excitement when one of the great prizes of spiritual life is theirs for the taking.

For those who are old enough to remember the game of snakes and ladders, the simple children's board game played with dice, they will remember the most dangerous square to land on is the square just before the goal. The ninety-ninth square holds the head of the longest of snakes. If you land on the hundredth square you win. But if you land on the ninety-ninth square, you fall down the snake to its tail, right back at the beginning. A yo-yo jhāna is like landing on the ninety-ninth square.You are very close to winning the game and entering a jhāna, but you fall just a little short, land on the snake head of excitement, and slide, or rather bounce, right back to the start.

Even so, yo-yo jhānas are so close to the real thing that they are not to be sneered at. In the yo-yo jhāna one experiences incredible bliss and transports of joy. It makes one feel as high as a weather balloon for hours, without a care in the world and with so much energy that one can hardly sleep. The experience is the greatest in one's life. It will change you.

Through a little more training and wise reflection on one's experiences, you will be able to fall into the nimitta, or be enveloped by it, without bouncing out. Then you have entered the amazing world of jhāna.

11

The Jhānas III: Bliss upon Bliss upon Bliss

The Landmarks of All Jhānas

FROM THE MOMENT of entering a jhāna, one will have no control. One will be unable to give orders as one normally does. When the will that is controlling vanishes, then the "I will" that fashions one's concept of future also disappears. Since the concept of time ceases in jhāna, the very question "What should I do next?" cannot arise. One cannot even decide when to come out. It is this absolute absence of will, and of its offspring, time, that gives the jhānas their timeless stability and allows them to last sometimes for many blissful hours.

Because of the perfect one-pointedness and fixed attention, one loses the faculty of perspective within jhāna. Comprehension relies on comparison—relating this to that, here to there, now with then. In jhāna, all that is perceived is an unmoving, enveloping, nondual bliss that allows no space for the arising of perspective. It is like that puzzle where one is shown a photograph of a well-known object from an unusual angle, and one has to guess what it is. It is very difficult to identify some objects without looking at them from different angles. When perspective is removed, so is comprehension. Thus in jhāna not only is there no sense of time but also there is no comprehension of what is going on. At the time, one will not even know which jhāna one is in. All one knows is great bliss, unmoving, unchanging, for unknown lengths of time.

Even though there is no comprehension within any jhāna, one is certainly not in a trance. One's mindfulness is greatly increased to a level of sharpness that is truly incredible. One is immensely aware. Only mindfulness doesn't move. It is frozen. And the stillness of the superpower mindfulness, the perfect one-pointedness of awareness, makes the jhāna experience completely different from anything one has known before. This is not unconsciousness. It is nondual consciousness. All it can know is one thing, and that is timeless bliss that doesn't move.

Afterward, when one has emerged from the jhāna, such consummate one-pointedness of consciousness falls apart. With the weakening of one-pointedness, perspective reemerges, and the mind has the ability to move again. The mind has regained the space needed to compare and comprehend. Ordinary consciousness has returned.

Having just emerged from a jhāna, it is the usual practice to look back at what has happened and review the jhāna experience. The jhānas are such powerful events that they leave an indelible record in one's memory store. In fact, one will never forget them as long as one lives. They are easy to recall with perfect retention. One comprehends the details of what happened in the jhāna, and one knows which of the jhānas it was. Moreover, *data obtained from reviewing a jhāna form the basis of the insight that leads to* *enlightenment.*

Another strange quality that distinguishes jhāna from all other experience is that within jhāna, all the five senses are totally shut down. One cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or feel touch. One cannot hear a crow cawing or a person coughing. Even if there were a thunderclap nearby, it wouldn't be heard in a jhāna. If someone tapped you on the shoulder, or picked you up and let you down, in jhāna you cannot know this. The mind in jhāna is so completely cut off from these five senses that they cannot break in.[9]

A lay disciple once told me how, completely by chance, he had fallen into a deep jhāna while meditating at home. His wife thought he had died and sent for an ambulance. He was rushed to hospital in a loud wail of sirens. In the emergency room, no heartbeat registered on the ECG, and no brain activity was seen by the EEG. So the doctor on duty put defibrillators on his chest to reactivate his heart. Even though he was being bounced up and down on the hospital bed through the force of the electric shocks, he didn't feel a thing. When he emerged from the jhāna in the emergency room, perfectly all right, he had no knowledge of how he had got there, nothing of ambulances and sirens, nothing of body-jerking defibrillators. All that long time that he was in jhāna, he was fully aware, but only of bliss. This is an example of what is meant by the five senses shutting down within the experience of jhāna.

Summary of the Landmarks of All Jhānas

It is helpful to know, then, that within a jhāna:

1. There is no possibility of thought;
2. No decision-making process is available;
3. There is no perception of time;
4. Consciousness is nondual, making comprehension inaccessible;
5. Yet one is very, very aware, but only of bliss that doesn't move;
6. The five senses are fully shut off, and only the sixth sense, mind, is in operation.

These are the features of jhāna. So during a deep meditation, if one wonders whether it is jhāna or not, one can be certain it is not! No such thinking can exist within the stillness of jhāna. These features will only be recognized upon emergence from a jhāna, using reviewing mindfulness once the mind can move again.

The Wobble (Vitakka and Vicāra)

All jhānas are states of unmoving bliss, almost. However, in the first jhāna, there is some movement discernible. I call this movement the "wobble" of first jhāna. One is aware of great bliss, so powerful it has subdued completely the part of the ego that wills and does. In jhāna, one is on automatic pilot, as it were, with no sense of being in control. However, the bliss is so delicious that it can generate a small residue of attachment. The mind instinctively grasps at the bliss. Because the bliss of the first jhāna is fueled by letting go, such involuntary grasping weakens the bliss. Seeing the bliss weaken, the mind automatically lets go of its grasping, and the bliss increases in power again. The mind then grasps again, then lets go again. Such subtle involuntary movement gives rise to the wobble of the first jhāna.

This process can be perceived in another way. As the bliss weakens because of the involuntary grasping, it seems as if mindfulness moves a small distance away from the bliss. Then the mindfulness gets pulled back into the bliss as the mind automatically lets go. This back-and-forth movement is a second way of describing the wobble.

This wobble is, in fact, the pair of first jhāna factors called *vitakka* and *vicāra*. Vitakka is the automatic movement back into the bliss; vicāra is the involuntary grasping of the bliss. Some commentators explain vitakka and vicāra as "initial thought" and "sustained thought." While in other contexts this pair can refer to thought, in jhāna they certainly mean something else. It is impossible that such a gross activity as thinking can exist in such a refined state as jhāna. In fact, thinking ceases a long time prior to jhāna. In jhāna, vitakka and vicāra are both subverbal and so do not qualify as thought. Vitakka is the subverbal movement of mind back into the bliss. Vicāra is the subverbal movement of mind that holds on to the bliss. Outside of jhāna, such movements of mind will often generate thought, and sometimes speech. But in jhāna, vitakka and vicāra are too subtle to create any thought. All they are capable of doing is moving mindfulness back into the bliss and holding mindfulness there.

One-Pointedness (Ekaggatā)

The third factor of the first jhāna is one-pointedness, *ekaggatā*. One-pointedness is mindfulness that is sharply focused on a minute area of existence. It is one-pointed in space because it sees only the point-source of bliss, together with a small area surrounding the bliss caused by the first jhāna wobble. It is one-pointed in time because it perceives only the present moment, so exclusively and precisely that all notion of time completely disappears. And it is one-pointed in phenomena because it knows only one object—the mental object of pīti-sukha—and is totally oblivious to the world of the five senses and one's physical body.

Such one-pointedness in space produces the peculiar experience, only found in jhāna, of nondual consciousness, where one is fully aware but only of one thing, and from one angle, for timeless periods. Consciousness is so focused on the one thing that the faculty of comprehension is suspended a while. Only after the one-pointedness has dissipated, and one has emerged from the jhāna, will one be able to recognize these features of the first jhāna and comprehend them all.

The one-pointedness in time produces the extraordinary stability of the first jhāna, allowing it to last effortlessly for such a long period of time. The concept of time relies on measuring intervals: from past to present or from present to future or from past to future. When all that is perceived within the first jhāna is the precise moment of now, then there is no room for measuring time. All intervals have closed. It is replaced with the perception of timelessness, unmoving.

One-pointedness of phenomena produces the exceptional occurrence of bliss upon bliss, unchanging throughout the duration of the jhāna. This makes the first jhāna such a restful abode.

In academic terms, *ekaggatā* is a Pāli compound meaning "onepeakness." The middle term *agga* (Sanskrit *agra*) refers to the peak of a mountain, the summit of an experience, or even the capital of a country (as in Agra, the old Moghul capital of India). Thus ekaggatā is not just any old one-pointedness; it is a singleness of focus on something soaring and sublime. The single exalted summit that is the focus of ekaggatā in the first jhāna is the supreme bliss of pīti-sukha.

Joy-Happiness (Pīti-sukha)

Indeed, the last two factors of the first jhāna are pīti and sukha, which I will discuss together since they are such a close-knit pair. In fact, they only separate out in the third jhāna, where pīti ceases and leaves sukha "widowed." Therefore, only after the third jhāna can one know from experience what sukha is and what pīti was. Here, it is sufficient to explain the pair as one thing.

These two factors of the first jhāna refer to the bliss that is the focus of mindfulness, and which forms the central experience of the first jhāna. Bliss is the dominant feature of the first jhāna, so much so that it is the first thing that one recognizes when reviewing after emerging from the jhāna. Indeed, mystic traditions more recent than Buddhism have been so overwhelmed by the sheer immensity, egolessness, stillness, ecstasy, ultimateness, and pure otherworldliness of the first jhāna that they have understood the experience as "union with God." However, the Buddha explained that this is but one form of supramundane bliss and there are other forms that are superior. In the Buddhist experience of jhāna, one comes to know many levels of supramundane bliss. The first jhāna is the first level. Even though after emerging from the first jhāna, one cannot conceive of an experience more blissful, there is much more!

Each level of bliss has a different "taste," a quality that sets it apart. These different qualities can be explained by the diverse causes of the bliss. Just as heat generated by sunlight has a different quality than heat caused by a wood fire, which in turn is different from heat generated by a furnace, so bliss fueled by different causes exhibits distinguishing features.

The distinguishing feature of the bliss of first jhāna is that it is fueled by the complete absence of all five sense activities. When the five senses have shut down, including all echoes of the five senses manifesting as thoughts, then one has left the world of the body and material things *(kāmaloka)* and has entered the world of pure mind *(rūpaloka).* It is as if a huge burden has dropped away. Or, as Ajahn Chah used to describe it, it is as if you have had a rope tied tightly around your neck for as long as you can remember. So long, in fact, that you have become used to it and no longer recognize the pain. Then somehow the tension is suddenly released and the rope is removed. The bliss you then feel is the result of that noose disappearing. In much the same way, the bliss of the first jhāna is caused by the complete fading away of a heavy burden, of all that you took to be the world. Such insight into the cause of the bliss of the first jhāna is fundamental to understanding the Buddha's four noble truths about suffering.

Summary of the First Jhāna

In summary then, the first jhāna is distinguished by the five factors, here compressed into three:

1 + 2. *vitakka-vicāra:* experienced as the “wobble,” being the fine, subtle movement in and out of the bliss;

3. *ekaggatā:* experienced as nonduality, timelessness, and stillness;

4 + 5. *pīti-sukha:* experienced as a bliss surpassing anything in the material world, and fueled by the complete transcendence of the world of the five senses.

The Second Jhāna

Subsiding of the Wobble

As the first jhāna deepens, the wobble lessens and the bliss consolidates. One comes to a state where vicāra is still holding on to the bliss with the most subtle of grasping, but this is not enough to cause any instability in the bliss. The bliss doesn't decrease as a result of vicāra, nor does mindfulness seem to move away from the source. The bliss is so strong that vicāra cannot disturb it. Although vicāra is still active, there is no longer any vitakka, no movement of mind back to the source of bliss. The wobble has gone. This is a jhāna state described in the suttas as without vitakka but with a small measure of vicāra (MN 128,31; AN VIII,63). It is so close to the second jhāna that it is usually included within that jhāna.

As the bliss strengthens into immutable stability, there is no purpose for vicāra to hold on anymore. At this point, the mind becomes fully confident, enough to let go absolutely. With this final letting go, born of inner confidence in the stability of the bliss, vicāra disappears and one enters the second jhāna proper.

The first feature, then, of the second jhāna described in the suttas is *avitakka* and *avicāra,* meaning "without vitakka and vicāra." In experience, this means that there is no more wobble in the mind. The second feature is *ajjhattaṁ sampasādanaṁ,* meaning "internal confidence." In experience, this describes the full confidence in the stability of the bliss, which is the cause for vicāra to cease.

Perfect One-Pointedness of Mind

The third and most recognizable feature of the second jhāna is *cetaso ekodibhāvaṁ,* or perfect one-pointedness of mind. When there is no longer any wobble, then the mind is like an unwavering rock, more immovable than a mountain and harder than a diamond. Such perfection in unyielding stillness is incredible. The mind stays in the bliss without the slightest vibration. This is later recognized as the perfection of the quality called *samādhi.*

Samādhi is the faculty of attentive stillness, and in the second jhāna this attention is sustained on the object without any movement at all. There is not even the finest oscillation. One is fixed, frozen solid, stuck with "superglue," unable even to tremble. All stirrings of mind are gone. There is no greater stillness of mind than this. It is called perfect samādhi, and it remains as a feature not only of this second jhāna but of the higher jhānas as well.

It is this perfection of samādhi that gives the bliss of the second jhāna its unique taste. The burden that affected the first jhāna, the affliction of movement, has been abandoned. Everything stands perfectly still, even the knower. Such absolute stillness transcends the mental pain born of the mind moving, and it reveals the great bliss fueled by pure samādhi. In the suttas, the bliss of the second jhāna is called the *pīti-sukha born of samādhi (samādhija pīti-sukha)* (DN 9,11). Such bliss is even more pleasurable, hugely so, than the bliss resulting from transcending the world of the five senses. One could not have anticipated such bliss. It is of a totally separate order. After experiencing this second jhāna, having realized two rare "species" of supramundane bliss that are extreme, one ponders what other levels of bliss may lie ahead.

Another salient feature of the second jhāna is that all doing has totally ceased, even the involuntary activity that caused the wobbling has completely vanished. The doer has died. Only when one has experience of the second jhāna can one fully appreciate what is meant by this term "doer"—just as a tadpole can fully appreciate what is meant by the term "water" only when water disappears during the frog's first experience on dry land. Not only is the doer gone, it seems as if this apparently essential part of one's eternal identity has been deleted from existence. What was seemingly obvious turns out to be a mirage, a delusion. One penetrates the illusion of free will using the data from raw experience. The philosopher (Sartre) who proposed "to be is to do" could not have known the second jhāna, where "being" is without any "doing." These jhānas are weird, and they defy normal experience. But they are real, more real than the world.

Summary of the Second Jhāna

Thus the second jhāna is distinguished by another four collections of factors:

1 + 2. *Avitakka-avicāra, ajjhattaṁ sampasādanaṁ:* experienced as the subsiding of the “wobble” from the first jhāna due to internal confidence in the stability of the bliss;
3. *Cetaso ekodibhāvaṁ:* perfect one-pointedness of mind due to full confidence in the bliss. This is usually experienced as rocklike stillness, or the perfection of samādhi;
4. *Samādhija pīti-sukha:* being the focus of this jhāna, the supramundane bliss generated by the end of all movement of the mind;
5. *The end of all doing:* seen as the first time that the “doer” has completely gone.

The Third Jhāna

As the stillness of the knower continues, the stillness of the known grows ever more profound. Remember that in jhāna, what is known is the image of the mind, and the mind is the knower. First the knower becomes still, then its image, the known, gradually becomes still.

In the first two jhānas, this image of the mind is recognized as a bliss that up until now has been called pīti-sukha. In the third jhāna, the image of the mind has gone to the next level of stillness, to a very different kind of bliss.

Pīti Has Vanished

Prior to the third jhāna all bliss had something in common, although it differed in its taste due to the distinguishing causes. That something in common was the combination of pīti plus sukha. Because they were always together, as inseparable as Siamese twins, it was not only pointless but even impossible to tell them apart. It was this combination that, up to now, gave all bliss a common quality. Now in the third jhāna pīti vanishes to leave only sukha, which produces a very different species of bliss altogether.

It is only after the experience of the third jhāna that one can know what sukha is, and by inference what pīti was. The pīti of the second jhāna seemed more euphoric than anything else.Yet it is now seen as the lesser part of the bliss. Sukha is the more refined part.

Great Mindfulness, Clear Knowing, and Equanimity

With all jhānas, the experiences are next to impossible to describe. The higher the jhāna, however, the more profound the experience and the more difficult it becomes to describe. These states and their language are remote from the world. At a stretch, one may say that the bliss of the third jhāna, the sukha, has a greater sense of ease, is quieter, and is more serene. In the suttas, it is accompanied by the features of mindfulness *(sati),* clear knowing *(sampajañña)*, and equanimity *(upekkhā),* although these qualities are said in the *Anupada Sutta* (MN 111) to be present in all jhānas. Perhaps these features are emphasized as qualities of the third jhāna in order to point out that in this very deep jhāna one is exceptionally mindful, very clear in the knowing, and so still that one looks on without moving, which is the root meaning of equanimity *(upekkhā).*

The Same Rocklike Stillness and Absence of a Doer

The third jhāna retains the perfect samādhi, the rocklike stillness, the absence of a doer, and the inaccessibility from the world of the five senses. It is distinguished from the second jhāna by the nature of the bliss, which has soared up to another level and appears as another species of bliss altogether. So much so that the suttas quote the enlightened one's description of the third jhāna as "abiding in bliss, mindful, just looking on" (DN 9,12).

Summary of the Third Jhāna

Thus the third jhāna has the following features:

1. The bliss has separated, losing the coarse part that was pīti;
2. The bliss that remains, sukha, exhibits the qualities of great mindfulness, clear knowing, and the sense of just looking on;
3. The same absolute rocklike stillness, and absence of a doer, as in the second jhāna.

The Fourth Jhāna

As the stillness of the knower calms that which is known, the bliss that was the central feature of the first three jhānas changes again when one enters the fourth jhāna. Only this time it changes more radically. Sukha completely disappears. What remains is an absolute still knower seeing absolute stillness.

From the perspective of the fourth jhāna, the bliss of the previous jhānas is seen as a residual movement of the mental object, and an affliction obscuring something much greater. When the bliss subsides, all that is left is the profound peace that is the hallmark of the fourth jhāna. Nothing moves in here, nothing glows. Nothing experiences happiness or discomfort. One feels perfect balance in the very center of the mind. As in the center of a cyclone, nothing stirs in the center of the mind's eye. There is a sense of perfection here, a perfection of stillness and of awareness. The Buddha described it as the purification of mindfulness, just looking on *(upekkhā sati pārisuddhi)* (DN 9,13).

The peace of the fourth jhāna is like no other peace to be found in the world. It can only be known having passed though the experience of the previous three jhānas. That passage is the only way of later confirming that the unmoving peace that one felt was indeed that of fourth jhāna. Furthermore, the state of fourth jhāna is so very still that one remains on its plateau for many hours. It seems impossible that one could experience the fourth jhāna for any less time.

Though pīti and sukha have both ceased in the fourth jhāna and all that is left is the perfection of peace, such an experience is later recognized, upon reviewing, as supremely delightful. The perfect peace of the fourth jhāna is seen as the best bliss so far. It is the bliss of no more bliss! This is not playing with words, trying to sound clever and mystical. This is how it is.

Summary of the Fourth Jhāna

Thus the fourth jhāna has the following features:

1. The disappearance of sukha;
2. An extremely long-lasting, and unchanging, perception of the perfection of peace, reached only through the lower three jhānas;
3. The same absolute rocklike stillness, and absence of a doer, as in the second and third jhāna;
4. The complete inaccessibility from the world of the five senses and one's body.

The Buddha's Similes for the Four Jhānas

The Buddha would often describe the experience within the four jhānas by evocative similes (e.g., MN 39,15-18; 77,25-28). Before explaining these similes, it is helpful to pause and clarify the meaning of *kāya,* a key Pāli word used in all the similes. *Kāya* has the same range of meanings as the English word "body." Just as "body" can mean things other than the body of a person, such as a "body of evidence," for example, so too *kāya* can mean things other than a physical body, such as a body of mental factors, *nāma-kāya* (DN 15,20). In the jhānas the five senses do not operate, which means that there is no experience of a physical body. The body has been transcended. Therefore, when the Buddha states in these four similes, "so that there is no part of his whole kāya unpervaded (by bliss and so on)," this can be taken to mean "so that there is no part of his *whole mental body of experience* unpervaded" (MN 39,16). This point is frequently misunderstood.

The Buddha's simile for the first jhāna is a ball of clay (used as soap) with just the right amount of moisture, neither too dry nor too wet. The ball of clay stands for the unified mind, wherein mindfulness has been restricted to the very small area created by the "wobble." The moisture stands for the bliss caused by total seclusion from the world of the five senses. The moisture that completely pervades the clay ball indicates the bliss that thoroughly pervades the space and duration of the mental experience. This is later recognized as bliss followed by bliss, and then more bliss, without interruption. That the moisture is not in excess, and so does not leak out, describes how the bliss is always contained in the space generated by the wobble, never leaking out of this area of mind-space into the world of the five senses, as long as the jhāna persists.

The second jhāna is likened to a lake with no external entry for water but with an internal spring that replenishes it with cool water. The lake represents the mind. The complete absence of any way that water from outside can enter the lake describes the inaccessibility of the mind by any influence from outside. Not even the doer can enter such a mind in this jhāna. Such hermetic inaccessibility is the cause of the rocklike stillness of the second jhāna. The internal spring that supplies the cool water represents *ajjhattam sampasādanam,* the internal confidence in the bliss of second jhāna. This internal confidence causes complete letting go, cooling the mind into stillness and freeing it from all movement. The coolness stands for the bliss itself, born of samādhi or stillness, which pervades the whole mental experience, unchanging throughout the duration of the jhāna.

The third jhāna is described by the metaphor of a lotus flower that thrives immersed in the cool water of a lake. The lotus represents the mind in the third jhāna. Water can cool the petals and leaves of a lotus but can never penetrate the lotus, since all water rolls off. The coolness stands for sukha, and the wetness stands for pīti. So like the lotus immersed in water, the mind in the third jhāna is cooled by sukha but is not penetrated by pīti. The mind in the third jhāna experiences only sukha. In the third jhāna, the mind continues to experience a rocklike stillness, never moving outside, just as the lotus in the simile always remains immersed within the water. Just as the cool water causes the lotus to thrive, so the bliss of the third jhāna sustains the mind therein. Once again, just as the cool waters in the simile pervade the lotus with coolness from its roots to its tips, so the unique bliss of the third jhāna pervades the whole mental experience from beginning to end.

The fourth jhāna is likened to a man draped from head to toe in a clean white cloth. The man represents the mind, while the cloth represents the perfect purity of equanimity and mindfulness that is the hallmark of the fourth jhāna. The mind in the fourth jhāna is stainless, spotless as a clean cloth, perfectly still and just looking on, purely and simply. This absolute purity of peacefulness pervades the whole body of mental experience, from the start to the end, just as the white cloth completely covers the man's body from head to toe.

Such is the meaning of the four similes for jhāna, as I understand them.

Moving from Jhāna to Jhāna

As I've indicated before, in a jhāna one cannot make any move. One cannot formulate any decision to proceed from this jhāna to that. One cannot even make a decision to come out. All such control has been abandoned within the jhāna. Furthermore, the profound stillness of mindfulness in jhāna freezes the mental activity of comprehension to the extent that, while in jhāna, one can hardly make sense of one's experience. The landmarks of jhāna are only recognized later, after emerging and reviewing. Thus, within any jhāna not only can one not move, but also one cannot know where one is nor where to move to! So how then does movement from jhāna to jhāna occur?

Imagine a four-room house with only one entrance door. Going through that door, one enters the first room. One must walk through the first room to enter the second, through the second room to enter the third, and through the third to enter the fourth. When leaving the house, one exits the fourth room and goes back to the third room, then to the second, then to the first. So one leaves the house by the same door through which one entered. Now suppose that the floors in all the rooms are so slippery that one cannot apply any additional momentum. Thus, if one enters the house with only a little momentum, one slides to a halt in the first room. With a greater amount of entry momentum, one may come to a stop in the second, the third, or the fourth room.

Such a simile describes how moving from jhāna to jhāna actually occurs. Within a jhāna one has no control. If one enters into jhānas with little momentum, one stops in the first jhāna. With greater momentum, one reaches the second or third jhānas. And with yet more entry momentum, one may reach the fourth jhāna. The entry momentum can only be generated outside of jhāna, when control is possible.

The momentum referred to here is that of letting go. One cultivates letting go *before* entering jhāna, to the point where it becomes an involuntary inclination of the mind, a strong natural tendency. If one enters the doorway into the jhānas with a modicum of letting-go momentum, one will stop in the first jhāna. With a stronger automatic tendency to let go, one reaches the second or third jhānas. With a very strong inclination to let go, one attains to the fourth jhāna. But one cannot increase the strength of letting-go momentum while inside the jhānas.

One can cultivate this momentum of letting go outside of jhāna by reviewing the experiences of bliss and by recognizing the obstacles called attachments. When the mind recognizes the great happiness of letting go, the inclination to let go grows. Sometimes I have taught my stubborn mind by thinking,"See, mind! See! See how much more bliss there is in the states of letting go. See, mind! Don't forget, mind, okay?" The mind then leans ever more strongly to letting go. Or the mind can recognize the obstacles to deeper bliss, which are the various levels of attachment. When the mind learns, through reviewing, to recognize the enemies to its own happiness—the attachments—then its inclination to let go becomes empowered by wisdom.

For another way to understand how one moves from jhāna to jhāna, recall the simile of the thousand-petaled lotus that opens in the sun. The first jhāna can be compared to a rare and delicate row of petals very near the center. Just as the petals of this row, now being warmed by the sun, conceal an even more fragrant row of petals underneath, so the rare and delicate first jhāna, now being warmed by still mindfulness, opens to reveal an even more blissful second jhāna. Thus the second jhāna lies within the first jhāna, the third within the second, and the fourth within the third, like the inner rows of lotus petals, one within the other.

When one has had much experience of jhāna, one can move from jhāna to jhāna using the power of *adhiṭṭhāna*. In this context, the word *adhiṭṭhāna* refers to the Buddhist way of programming the mind. At the beginning of one's meditation, one can program the mind to enter a specified jhāna for a predetermined length of time. Of course, this works only for an accomplished meditator who is familiar with the destination and is well acquainted with the route. It is like setting the automatic pilot shortly after takeoff. Even accomplished meditators, however, must traverse the usual path to reach a specified jhāna. For example, if one programs the mind to enter the third jhāna, then one must pass through the first and second jhānas first, although one may do so quickly.

The Immaterial Attainments

In the simile of the thousand-petaled lotus, four of the innermost rows of petals represent the jhānas. The eighth innermost row is the first jhāna; the seventh innermost, the second jhāna; the sixth innermost, the third jhāna; and the fifth innermost, the fourth jhāna. You now are probably wondering what the last four rows of petals represent. Beyond the four jhānas lie the four immaterial attainments. It is noteworthy that the Buddha never calls these attainments "jhānas" in the suttas. Only the commentaries, compiled a thousand years later, call them that. The four immaterial attainments are as follows:

the mind-base of unlimited space
the mind-base of unlimited consciousness
the mind-base of nothingness
the mind-base of neither perception nor nonperception

Just as the fourth jhāna lies within the third jhāna, so the first immaterial attainment lies within the fourth jhāna, the second immaterial attainment within the first immaterial attainment, and so on like the rows of petals in a lotus. Thus, of necessity, all four immaterial attainments possess the following features carried over from the jhāna:

- The mind remains inaccessible to the world of the five senses and all knowledge of the body;
- The mind persists in rocklike stillness, incapable of forming any thought or making any plan, for long periods of time;
- Comprehension is so frozen that one can hardly make sense, at the time, of one's experience. Comprehension is achieved after emerging;
- The pure equanimity and mindfulness of the fourth jhāna remains as a foundation for each immaterial attainment.

Just as the first three jhānas take different forms of bliss as their object, and the fourth jhāna takes a sublime state of pure peace as its object, so each of the immaterial attainments takes a pure mental object. The perceptions of these objects I call *mind-bases,* since they are the mental platforms on which the immaterial attainments rest. These unmoving mind-bases become ever more refined, and empty, the higher the immaterial attainment.

Back in the fourth jhāna, mindfulness is powerful and still, just looking on at the perfection of peace well beyond the world of the five senses and precisely one-pointed. In states of precise one-pointedness, ordinary concepts derived from the world are squeezed out, and other unworldly perceptions replace them.

For example, when a meditator in the early stages becomes perfectly focused in the present moment, which means one-pointed in time, ordinary concepts of time are squeezed out, and unworldly perceptions of time replace them. When one is fully centered within the present moment, on the one hand it feels timeless and, on the other hand, it feels as if one has all the time in the world. Within the point of absolute now, time is without edges, undefined, empty, and immeasurable. It is infinite and nothing at the same time. It is unlimited *(anantā).* The experience of one-pointedness in time, seen early in the meditation, can be the key to understanding the simultaneous sense of infinity and emptiness in the immaterial attainments.

The Mind-Base of Unlimited Space

From the fourth jhāna, the mind can look into the perfect peace to perceive absolute one-pointedness in space. This is one of the features of the fourth jhāna always available for inspection, as it were, and it is the doorway into the immaterial attainments. In this absolute one-pointedness, space is perceived as both infinite and empty, a sort of no-space. Because it is perceived as empty of that which usually limits space, that is, material form *(rūpa),* this attainment and those following are called immaterial *(arūpa)* attainments.

The first immaterial attainment, then, is the mind-base of unlimited space, perceived as both infinite and empty, immeasurable and undefined. This is the perception that fills the mind thoroughly and persists without blinking for the long duration of the attainment. Mindfulness, powerful, still, and purified, looks on at this perception with utter contentment.

The Mind-Base of Unlimited Consciousness

Within the perception of unlimited space lies the perception of no-space, of space losing its meaning. When the mind attends to this feature within the first immaterial attainment, space disappears and is replaced by the perception of absolute one-pointedness of consciousness. In this state, consciousness simultaneously feels infinite and empty, immeasurable and undefined. One has entered the second immaterial attainment of the mind-base of unlimited consciousness. This perception fills the mind completely and persists without wavering for even longer periods of time.

The Mind-Base of Nothingness

Within the perception of unlimited consciousness lies the perception of no-consciousness, of consciousness now losing its meaning as well. When the mind focuses on this feature within the second immaterial attainment, all perceptions of consciousness disappear. Perceptions of material form and space have already disappeared, so all that is left is the one-pointedness of nothingness. One has entered the third immaterial attainment of the mind-base of nothingness. This concept fills the mind totally, persisting unchangingly for yet longer periods of time.

The Mind-Base of Neither Perception nor Nonperception

Within the perception of nothingness lies the perception of not even nothing! If the mind is subtle enough to see this feature, then the perception of nothingness disappears and is replaced by the perception of neither perception nor nonperception. All that one can say about this fourth immaterial attainment is that it is, in fact, a perception (AN IX, 42). In the simile of the thousand-petaled lotus, this state is represented by the last row of petals, still closed, with all the other petals fully open. This last row of petals is almost not like petals at all, being the most subtle and sublime, for it clasps within its gossamer fabric the famous “jewel in the heart of the lotus,” nibbāna.

Nibbāna, the Cessation of All Perception

Within the perception of neither perception nor nonperception lies the end of all perception, the cessation of all that is felt or perceived, nibbāna. If the mind attends to this, the mind stops. When the mind starts again, one gains the attainment of arahant or anāgāmī. These are the only possibilities.

Gradual Cessation

Another way of viewing the jhānas and the four immaterial attainments is by placing them in the sequence of gradual cessation. The process that leads into the first jhāna is the cessation of the world of the five senses together with the body and all doing. The path from the first to the fourth jhāna is the cessation of that part of the mind that recognizes pleasure and displeasure. The road from the fourth jhāna to the fourth immaterial attainment is the cessation, almost, of the remaining activity of mind called "knowing." And the last step is the cessation of the last vestige of knowing. Through jhānas and the immaterial attainments, first one lets go of the body and the world of the five senses. Then one lets go of the doer. Then one lets go of pleasure and displeasure. Then one lets go of space and consciousness. Then one lets go of all knowing. When one lets go of an object, the object disappears, ceases. If it remains, one hasn't let go. Through letting go of all that can be known, the knower ceases. This is the cessation of everything, including the mind. This is the place where consciousness no longer manifests, where earth, water, fire, and air find no footing, where name-and-form are wholly destroyed (DN 11,85). Emptiness. Cessation. Nibbāna, the jewel in the heart of the lotus.

In this chapter on the jhānas, I have led you on a journey from theory to practice, up to the high mountain ranges where lie the great summits that are the jhānas, and up higher to the rarefied peaks that are the immaterial attainments. Though the tour may seem way beyond you today, tomorrow you may find yourself well advanced along the route. So it is helpful even today to have this road map before you.

Moreover, these jhānas are like immensely rich gold mines, but carrying the most precious of insights rather than a precious metal. They supply the raw material, the unexpected data, which build those special insights that open one's eyes to nibbāna. The jhānas are jewels that adorn the face of Buddhism. They are essential to the experience of enlightenment, and they are possible today.

I conclude this chapter with the words of the Lord Buddha:

> There is no jhāna without wisdom;
> There is no wisdom without jhāna;
> But for one with both jhāna and wisdom,
> They are in the presence of nibbāna.
>
> (Dhp 372)

12

The Nature of Deep Insight

INSIGHT IS COMMON; deep insight is rare. Insight is comforting; deep insight is challenging, sometimes terrifying. Insight makes little impression on one's character; deep insight changes one's life.

For example, two monks were arguing over a flag in the wind. One said that the flag moved. The other said that the wind moved. They went to see a Zen master who told them that they were both wrong. The mind moved. Then a Theravāda forest monk came along and said that all three of them had missed the point. The problem was that their mouths moved! That's insight.

A monk I know told me that as a layman he had once had a powerful meditation experience of deep prolonged bliss, better than sexual orgasm, wherein the body had vanished and everything was still. That unusual experience challenged his previous understanding of happiness; it overturned it and changed his whole life. He became a monk for the rest of his life. That was a *deep* insight.

The Tenfold Path

In the collection of suttas called the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha's sermons are arranged according to the number of items mentioned in the text. For example, the four right efforts, the four roads to power, and many other fourfold groups are collected in the chapter titled "Fours." When I first read the "Eights" chapter in this collection, I expected to find the most famous of the eights, the eightfold path. It wasn't there, and I was stunned. You see, in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the famous eightfold path is found in the "Tens" chapter, because two extra factors are added by the Buddha (AN X,103). The two additional factors of this tenfold path are right (or perfect) wisdom *(sammā-nāṇaṁ)* and right liberation *(sammā-vimutti).*

It can be concluded that the eightfold path refers to the practice, to what one does, whereas the extra two factors, perfect wisdom and perfect liberation, refer to the goal, to the result of the practice. Thus the tenfold path teaches the way together with the destination.

Deep insight refers to perfect wisdom, sammā-ñāṇaṁ. As the Aṅguttara texts make plain, deep insight/perfect wisdom is not possible without jhāna, perfect samādhi (AN X,103). Furthermore, the inevitable consequence of deep insight is perfect liberation, in other words, enlightenment.

Perfect Wisdom—

Seeing Things as They Truly Are

In the suttas perfect wisdom or deep insight is often called "seeing things as they truly are" *(yathā bhūta ñāṇadassana).* Many people claim insight and assert that they see things as they truly are. However, they seldom agree. Thus it is that we have so many religions and so many sects within each religion, each claiming that it sees things as they truly are but that others do not! Even those holding no religion are the same, since they believe that only no-religion sees things as they truly are. Why is "insight" so conducive to arguments?

The problem is that there are few indeed who see things as they truly are. The vast majority see things as they appear to be, and then take that to be insight, to be truth. Be warned! Even when one is mindful, what appears to the senses has already been filtered, washed, and dressed to please you.

A fellow monk, a veteran of the Vietnam War, had received a bullet to the back of his head, and the injury had destroyed a small part of his brain. The doctors thought he would be blind, but they were wrong. His sight appeared perfect. Many weeks later, while playing baseball with some friends, the batsman slugged the ball high in the air in his direction. As he moved to make the easy catch, following the trajectory with his eyes, the ball suddenly vanished. It disappeared from the universe! A few seconds later, it reappeared again further along its trajectory. It was the first time that he realized that he had a blind spot. The problem with blind spots is that one cannot see them. There is, indeed, a hole in one's visual field, but the mind fills in that hole with what it assumes to be there, and one cannot see the mind doing this! Our experiences, even when they are mindfully observed, are not always the way things truly are.

Temporary blind spots, which we don't know are there, arise whenever we are seduced by lust or burned by anger. When one is in love one is blind to the faults in one's partner. As one man said to his new son-in-law, "That you regard my daughter as perfect is quite natural since you are in love. But in one or two years' time, when you begin to see her defects, always remember this: if my daughter didn't have those faults to begin with, she would have been able to marry someone much better than you!" Because of desire or wishful thinking, we bend reality to meet with our liking.

Similarly, when one is angry, one can only see the faults in the world, in one's partner, and even in the dog. So we kick the dog! The way things truly are, as it seems in states of anger, is that one's suffering is the fault of others, including the poor dog. In Buddhism, anger is called temporary insanity. It is a dangerous illness wherein we think we see things as they truly are, but in fact our views are distorted.

Pride is, perhaps, the most invisible and insidious of forces that corrupt our wisdom. We build our identity out of our views. So much so, that to change one's view, to admit that one is wrong, often threatens one's very idea of oneself. It becomes easier and more comfortable to deny the evidence and nurture more blind spots in one's mind. That way, what enters our conscious awareness is only what we want to know. Indeed, it takes much courage to see things the way they truly are, because one has to let go of so many precious views. And to see the Dhamma is terrifying, because one has to let go of the most precious idea of all, the view of a self.

So how can one be sure that one is seeing things as they truly are? How does one recognize the difference between deep insight and delusion? The answer is, only when the five hindrances are suppressed can one be certain that one is seeing things as they truly are.

The Five Hindrances and Deep Insight

The five hindrances block one seeing things the way they truly are. As a reminder, the five hindrances are

sensory desire
ill will
sloth and torpor
restlessness and remorse
doubt

Sensory desire bends the truth to suit our liking. For example, when I drank my first glass of beer in my early teens, I could not believe how disgusting it tasted. However, the male society in which I lived almost worshipped beer and held it up as an essential part of all celebrations. So, after a short time, I began to enjoy the taste of beer. It wasn't that the taste of beer had changed but that my perception of the taste had changed to fit what I wanted. The truth had been bent by desire. Sex is similar. The socially conditioned hormonal hunger for copulation twists raw experience to make sex appear as pleasure. Is sexual pleasure the way things truly are, or just the way desire makes it seem? Venerable Ānanda said to Venerable Vaṅgīsa that lust is but an inversion of perception (SN 8,4)!

Ill will, the second hindrance, is the force behind denial. We are so averse to old age, sickness, and death that we are in denial, thinking it will not happen to us. We refuse to see the reality of this body as it truly is and instead maintain a lie. We hate the idea of separation from our loved ones and so live in the fantasy that they'll be there for us always. We detest being proved wrong so much that we manipulate the facts to deceive ourselves. In summary, the truth is often not to our liking, and we simply block it all out, subconsciously. Ill will is a major hindrance blocking us from seeing the way things truly are.

Sloth and torpor is lethargy of body and dullness of mind. It is experienced as if walking in the dark when nothing is clear. Again, it is at nighttime, when one cannot see clearly, that one's girlfriend looks like a supermodel or one's boyfriend looks like a football-star hunk. Not many would fall in love if they went courting during the day, when they could clearly see each other's pimples. The night bends the truth of things. Just as the dim light of sloth and torpor distorts the way things truly are.

Restlessness and remorse don't allow one time to fully see things as they truly are. When the mind is moving fast, the information arriving at awareness is incomplete. For example, my monastery is situated on the top of a hill, just over two kilometers from the highway. After going up and down that hill for several years only in a car, I decided one day to walk up the steep road. While walking, I was surprised that the hillside and valley, which I had assumed I knew well, appeared different from anything I had seen before. Not only did it seem more beautiful, but the scenery was also more rich in detail and color. Then I stood still and it all changed again. Not moving, I saw the view become ever more glorious, noticing exquisite features that I had missed before. It was all so clear, so full, and so delightful. When one looks through the window of a moving car, one's eyes can only receive a fraction of what is going on beyond the window. The light that falls on one's retina does not have enough time to form a complete picture before the next image takes its place. When one is walking, sight has more time to pick up the features. And then when one stands still, seeing has full opportunity to know all the rich beauty of that wonderful valley. Only when I stopped moving could I see the full truth that lay in the hillside. Similarly, only when the mind stands still can one see the full truth of the way things really are.

Doubt was compared by the Buddha to being lost in a desert (MN 39,14), with no signpost or map to find the way. Doubt blocks seeing the way things truly are simply because one does not know where to look, nor how to look. The Buddha gave a map called the Dhamma, recorded for posterity in the suttas, to point out the way. Books such as this one play their part in reinforcing the message of the suttas by adding more signposts in the desert.

In summary, the five hindrances are delusion's spin doctors. They block one from seeing things as they truly are, and instead present to one's awareness what is socially acceptable, pleasing, and unchallenging. Moreover, the work of these five hindrances is done behind the scenes. One is mostly unaware of their manipulations. That is why it's called delusion. So when these five hindrances have been operating, one cannot be sure that the object of one's mindfulness is the way things truly are. The only time of certainty, when insight can be trusted, is when the five hindrances have been suppressed for some time.

Thus the prerequisite for all meaningful insight, especially deep insight, is that the five hindrances are abandoned for long periods of time.

Upacāra Samādhi—

the Immediate Neighbor of Jhāna

The five hindrances are abandoned through jhāna. It is true that one cannot gain deep insight while experiencing jhāna. This is because the jhāna states are too still for the mental activity of contemplation to occur. Nevertheless, the jhāna experience serves the purpose of firmly suppressing the five hindrances for long periods of time after emerging from a jhāna, and it is then that deep insight is possible.

The state of meditation immediately after emerging from a jhāna is called *upacāra samādhi,* which means “the immediate neighbor of jhāna.” In this state, the five hindrances are totally inactive for several hours or more. Mindfulness is superpowerful, easily focused, and fearless. This is because the disabling five hindrances are suppressed. It is here that, in the Buddha’s own words, “the mind is purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability” (MN 4,27), so that deep insight can happen.

The period just before entering the first jhāna is also upacāra samādhi. During this period one is also in the immediate neighborhood of the first jhāna. This is usually experienced as the ability to remain effortlessly for a long time with a very beautiful and still nimitta. Here the five hindrances are also suppressed. However, the upacāra samādhi prior to jhāna is notoriously unstable when compared with that occurring post-jhāna. At this time the five hindrances can easily sneak back in, because they have been only recently and lightly suppressed. Should one attempt to contemplate Dhamma at this time, the upacāra samādhi will be lost and the five hindrances will return. This is why the Buddha stated in the suttas (AN III,100) that contemplating the Dhamma at this time is an obstacle and should not be done.

Thus, as the Buddha said in the *Naḷakapāna Sutta* (MN 68,6), so long as one has not yet attained the first jhāna or a higher jhāna, the five hindrances together with discontent and weariness will invade one’s mind and remain. But when one does attain at least the first jhāna, then the five hindrances, discontent, and weariness do not invade one’s mind nor remain. Since the suppressing of the five hindrances is necessary for deep insight, so also is jhāna necessary.

The Story of the Two Messengers

To emphasize that jhāna is essential for deep insight, the Buddha taught the simile of the two messengers. The main elements of the simile are found in the *Kiṃsuka Sutta* (SN 35,245)[10] and told in detail in the commentary. Here, I will paraphrase the simile.

An emperor was preparing his son in the skills of governing. To give the young prince direct experience, he appointed him viceroy over a small state just within the borders of the empire. He granted his son all the powers of a king and sent him off to learn how to rule.

Some months later, a delegation of leading citizens from that state came to complain to the emperor that the prince was failing to fulfill his duties. The prince was partying every day, which was understandable, perhaps, since it was the young man's first time away from home.

The emperor summoned his wisest minister and asked him to go to that state and instruct his son on the responsibilities of a ruler. But the wise minister foresaw that the arrogant young prince would not listen to him if he went alone. So he asked that the most powerful of the generals in the imperial army accompany him on the mission. The emperor concurred, and thus the two messengers—the wise minister and the powerful general—went together to instruct the young prince.

When they eventually arrived at the prince's palace, they could hear the merriment of a party in full swing inside the living quarters, but they were prevented from entering by the prince's five friends. When the wise minister announced who they were and who had sent them, the prince's five companions simply laughed in ridicule and told them to go back from where they had come."This is our prince's territory," they asserted, "and he will do as he likes here!"

The wise minister was unable to talk any sense into the prince's five friends, so the powerful general took out his sword and approached the five friends. In a moment, the prince's five companions completely disappeared from sight.

Then the pair entered unhindered into the palace, stopped the party, and stood before the prince. Once again, the wise minister announced who they were and where they were from. The prince, like his five friends, told the pair to get lost, since this was his principality and he would do as he liked. He stubbornly refused to listen to his father's wisest counselor. So the powerful general took out his sword once again, grabbed the prince by his hair, and held the sharp edge of the sword against the throat of the prince.

"Listen, prince, to your father's minister!" ordered the general.

"I'm listening! I'm listening!" squeaked the prince, feeling the blade against his skin.

Thus it was, with the powerful general holding the prince absolutely still, with the prince giving his fullest attention, and with the emperor's wise minister instructing the young man, that the prince understood all about the duties and rewards of a ruler. From that time on, he was a changed man. He ruled his state wisely, and in due course the whole empire, to the happiness of all.

In this simile, the emperor was the Buddha and the prince one of his disciples. The wise minister stands for insight and the powerful general stands for jhāna. It is jhāna, not insight that dispels the five hindrances, represented by the prince's five friends. And it is the upacāra samādhi following jhāna that holds the mind still long enough for insight to occur and instruct the mind in Dhamma.

The Gong Bonger

As the above simile of the two messengers shows, the mind needs to be held still to see deeply into the nature of things. I often demonstrate this point in public with the "gong bonger exercise."

I hold up the stick that is used to strike the gong by my seat and ask my audience, "What is this?"

"A stick," someone says.

"What else?" I reply.

"Cylindrical," another offers.

"Anything else?" I continue.

"Black one half, white the other." "Cloth on the white half." "Six inches long," "Used to strike the gong."

"Is that all this thing is?" I encourage.

"Shiny." "Rounded ends." "Worn where you grip it."

When the descriptions dry up and my audience is still looking, they realize that they haven't finished understanding what the gong bonger is yet. The longer they look, the more they see. And that which they begin to see now hasn't got words to describe it. They realize that the labels were superficial. It is much, much more than a "stick,""cylindrical,""half black, half white," and so on. The labels are what we are taught as children in school. They are what the Buddha called "conventional reality." They obstruct understanding when we mistake the label for the thing. When my audience said "It's a stick" and thought that they had captured its meaning, they stopped investigating further. I had to cajole them into continuing their discovery until all the labels were exhausted, until they began to see the thing beyond all the labels, to see with a silent, still mind.

The Most Beautiful Clump of Bamboo in the World

On my first meditation retreat, while still a student at Cambridge, we were all allowed to go for a walk for an hour each morning to exercise the body. On the first morning, having experienced some quiet meditation already, I decided to go to the botanical gardens nearby. When I entered the gardens my mind was struck by the beauty of a clump of bamboo just inside the entrance gate. It was the most exquisite plant that I had seen in my life. The shape and texture of the long stems were bewitching, the colors shone brilliantly in the morning light, the proportions of trunk to tapering branch to slender leaf were perfection, and the way the whole ensemble swayed so gracefully in the breeze entranced me. I stood still for I don't know how many minutes just gazing in awe at that wondrous bamboo. Then I sat down on a bench close by and continued to explore the beauty of the bamboo until the hour was up. I had to force myself back to the meditation retreat.

The following day I returned and the wonder of the bamboo grabbed me again. Once more, I spent the hour for physical exercise sitting still on the bench staring at the same small clump of bamboo. For eight of the nine mornings of that retreat (for one day I walked along the river Granta in need of real exercise), I spent my hour gazing in pleasure at a simple stand of bamboo at the entrance to the Cambridge botanical gardens, and I never had enough!

A week or so after the retreat had concluded, when I had a free hour one morning, I rode my bicycle to revisit my old friend, the most beautiful clump of bamboo in the world. When I arrived I was confused and disappointed. The same bamboo was there, but it looked so ordinary, spindly, drab, and uninspiring. It appeared such a scruffy little bush!

The change made me investigate what had altered that clump of bamboo, so gorgeous a few days before. I soon understood that it was my mind that had changed, not the bamboo. After the retreat, and after riding my bicycle through Cambridge city traffic, my mind was far from the stillness it had known on retreat. Now it could only see the surface of things, the labels, and the faults. It was unable to hold the bamboo long enough in stillness to dive deep into its beautiful and inexhaustible depths. Just like the prince in the simile of the two messengers above, it cannot see the truth until it has been held still by samādhi.

During that first meditation retreat, I had my first experiences of deep meditation. My mind was extraordinarily still when I walked into those gardens. So when my eyes turned to that bamboo, my mind stayed there, played there, dived into the heart of the matter, and enjoyed itself greatly. When one's mind is that still, even the gong bonger becomes amazingly intricate and charming.

And so much is seen going on in the gong bonger, that one can watch it happily for hours, never finishing with all it has to teach.

The Flashlight Plus the Map

It is exciting and enormous spiritual fun to see a drab clump of bamboo transform into the most beautiful bush in the world, but it doesn't change one's life. Delusion is much harder to penetrate than the hardest bamboo. Nevertheless, such experiences serve to show how much deeper the mind can see when it has been empowered by samādhi. The more peaceful the samādhi, the more still and fearless is the mind, and the more penetrating is the mindfulness. This is why the mind after jhāna is the usual place where deep insights occur.

After jhāna, deep insight can fail to occur when one does not know where to look. A clump of bamboo is an example of the wrong place to look! To continue the simile from chapter 8, the mind after jhāna can be compared to a very powerful flashlight that illuminates all before it. But when one does not know where to point that flashlight, one is unlikely to discover the hiding place of deep insight. Thus, as well as a powerful flashlight, one also needs an accurate map. The teaching of the Buddha, the Dhamma, is that map.

When one has only a map but no flashlight, or only a very weak one, then again one will not find deep insight. This is like the scholar who has studied the suttas, discussed them with highly attained meditators, and thus has a good grasp of the theory—but who has no personal experience of jhāna. Deep insight cannot occur because the flashlight is too weak.

But for one who has the map, who has listened to experienced teachers, asking questions and studying, and who also has the powerful flashlight, the jhāna-empowered mind—such a person is close to deep insight. As the Buddha once said,"Those with jhāna [the flashlight] and wisdom [the map] are in the presence of enlightenment." (Dhp 372)

13

The Deep Insight That Liberates

Remembering Past Lives

ACCORDING TO THE ACCEPTED ACCOUNT of the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, having empowered his mind by entering the jhānas, the very first area of deep insight to which he applied his mind was the question of past lives. Thus, according to the "map" found in the suttas, this is a valid place to begin in order to gain deep insight.

Much discussion is heard in modern Buddhist circles regarding the validity of past lives. Unfortunately, many of these views are misinformed, mistaken, or devoid of any deep insight. An investigation into the earliest Buddhist suttas clearly shows that rebirth is not simply a "cultural addition," as some would have us believe, but instead that rebirth forms a central pillar of the Buddha's deep insight. For instance, the standard definition by the Buddha for one who has wrong view is one who does not believe in kamma and rebirth (MN 117,5). More emphatically, the Buddha said in the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta* ("The Incontrovertible Teaching"; MN 60,8),"Since there actually is another world [rebirth], one who holds the view 'there is no rebirth' has wrong view."[11]

Skeptics rightly demand to know how one can verify for oneself, here and now, that rebirth is a truth. I will explain how verification is done, that is, how one penetrates to one of the life-changing deep insights: that which sees one's past lives.

One evening, while emerging from a very peaceful meditation, I gave a simple, clear instruction to my mind: What is my earliest memory? Then I returned to inner silence, not expecting a thing, alert to the content of the present moment.

A few moments later, a familiar smell came to my nose. I was not imagining the smell; I was reexperiencing it clearly in the present moment. Along with the smell came the eerie but certain recollection that this was the smell of my pram when I was a baby. Immediately it was as if I was back in my pram, reexperiencing the world of a newly born infant in all its details. I couldn't help smiling at seeing with my inner eye one of my favorite toys of that time, a cute blue toy pig my mother called Porky, which rattled when she walked it for me. With extraordinary precision and ease, I was remembering details of the life of a newly born infant, while sitting in the body of a forty-plus-year-old monk. The whole event was accompanied by an extraordinary sense of certainty that there was not the slightest doubt that this baby was me over forty years ago. It totally surprised me and changed the way I understood memory. As a matter of interest, I later found out from a medical doctor that the first sense that develops in a newborn child is the sense of smell. A baby recognizes its mother and other familiar things, like its own pram, by their smell. I can confirm this from my own direct experience.

When one understands the method to access early memories, one can continue by suggesting clearly to one's mind, "Earlier, please." Then one returns to inner stillness with no expectations, quietly attending to the present moment. If the previous state of samādhi was deep enough, another memory will come. If it comes, it comes quickly, effortlessly, and if it is a genuine early memory, it is always accompanied by the extraordinary sense of certainty, that this was from an earlier time. If there is the slightest of doubt, the memory can't be trusted and is probably wishful thinking.

Some of my students have reexperienced themselves within their mother's womb, floating in the waters, warm and contained. Some reexperience even stranger memories, being a person much older than they are now, in another body at another place in a time long ago. The realization is shocking but unavoidable, that this was them in a previous life.

These recollections generated by jhāna are substantially clearer than what we normally call memory, and they are totally different from what we call fantasy. They occur only in states of heightened awareness, where one's clarity of perception is greatly enhanced, both of which produce the unique feature of certain recognition of the identity involved.

Moreover, often these early memories are so disturbing that they cannot be the products of wishful thinking. One student, remembering her first weeks as a newborn infant, looked up at the woman who was lovingly cradling her and was alarmed to see the features of a woman so different from those of the person she knew as her mother. Had she been adopted? Was there something her mother hadn't told her? At the first opportunity she confronted the person that she had called her mom for as long as she knew, and asked her bluntly if she really was her biological mother. Her mother, taken aback, first inquired why she was asking this question. When the mother was told of the meditation-induced memory, she asked my student to describe the woman that she had seen in her meditation. With ease, and in great detail, my student described that woman's features. Her mother smiled as she recognized the description immediately. For that woman was the nanny that her mother had hired in the first weeks of her life. The mother was amazed that her daughter could remember this woman so accurately. And the daughter was relieved that her mom was her mom.

Some memories are even more disturbing, for they recall one's own death in a past life. Some students have found this so unpleasant that they have recoiled from the memory after only a few seconds. It is to be noted that one's previous death is the past-life event closest in time to our present existence, and the commonly intense experience leaves an indelible scar. It takes the fearlessness generated by samādhi to watch this harrowing event and then go beyond, back to earlier times. It takes a commitment to truth. Its unpleasantness proves beyond doubt that these are not wishful fantasies but accurate and shocking recollections of real events from one's past life.

These recollections of past lives qualify as deep insight for four reasons. First, the Buddha called them the first of the "threefold knowledges" *(tevijjā)* (MN 91,33) leading to enlightenment. And in the *Sekha Sutta* (MN 5 3,20), the Buddha likened the recollection of one's past lives to the first breaking out of a hen's chicks from their eggs. Second, they arise only after an experience of jhāna, just as the seeing of things as they truly are *(yathā bhūta ñāṇadassana)* happens only after jhāna (AN VII,61). Third, the recollection of past lives is based on personal experience here and now, and not on beliefs, traditions, or inferences. Fourth, these recollections change one's whole life. One experiences a great paradigm shift. For instance, the fear of one's own death and grief over other people's deaths are immensely diminished. The present life is now viewed from another perspective. One has the "big picture," as they say, the whole jigsaw puzzle rather than one tiny piece called the years of this life. Most important, only now has one received the raw data from one's own widened experience to truly appreciate what the Buddha means by *dukkha,* or suffering. One will understand why the Buddha's wisest disciple, Sāriputta, said: "Getting reborn again is the meaning of dukkha, ending rebirth is the meaning of happiness!" (AN X,65).

Deep Insight into Dukkha

The four noble truths are the central teaching of the Buddha. The first of these truths is the truth of dukkha. The Buddha then stated that the main reason why beings are not enlightened is that they do not *fully* understand dukkha (DN 16,2,1).

One reason why beings do not understand dukkha fully is that they see only this present life, and often only a portion of this life. Already in denial about their inevitable sickness and death, they deny their past and future lives even more strongly! When one does not seek out the full picture, one will never reach full understanding. Thus those who commit themselves to truth, and aspire to the freedom that truth brings, must challenge this profound denial of rebirth with the deep insight born of jhāna.

For when one does gain the deep insight of many lives, based on jhāna and consequently without any doubt, then deep insight can arise into the full meaning of dukkha. One can now understand the sayings of the Buddha like the following:

> The stream of tears that you have shed through countless lives in saṃsāra, through meeting misfortune, is more than all the waters in the oceans. (SN 15,3)

> The dead bones that you have left behind through countless deaths, if heaped together would be taller than any mountain. (SN 15,10)

> For such a long time have your bones filled the cemeteries, long enough to experience revulsion to life, to become dispassionate to life and liberated from life. (SN 15,1)

Full understanding sees that whenever there is birth, there will be consequent suffering. Deep insight, based on the direct knowledge of the almost unimaginable breadth of saṃsāra, sees this in one's guts, not in the intellect. It sees the crucial first link of dependent origination *(paṭiccasamuppāda),* "birth is the cause of dukkha" *(jātipaccayā dukkha)*. From this life-changing insight, craving and attachments begin their unraveling. There's nothing worth clinging to anymore.

The experience of a jhāna opens up a second avenue to the full understanding of dukkha: deep insight into happiness! One of the major features of a jhāna is the prolonged experience of a bliss that one never knew before. The bliss of jhāna, as I have said, is far more pleasurable and lasting than sexual orgasm. It is unforgettable. It overturns one's conception of happiness. Even falling in love is not as enjoyable as this. It is unavoidable that one will inquire what is this bliss and where did it come from.

The Rope That Strangles

Ajahn Chah's vivid simile of the rope that strangles, mentioned in chapter 11, helps to explain such happiness. Imagine a man born with a rope around his neck, continually pulled tight by two strong and invisible demons. He grows up like this, and knowing no different becomes accustomed to the difficulty to the point that he doesn't even notice it. Even when he practices mindfulness he cannot discern the tight rope. It is always there, it is considered normal, and so it is excluded from his field of attention. Then one day the two demons, called "Five Senses" and "Doing," disappear for a while and let go of the rope. For the very first time in his life the man experiences freedom from constriction, freedom from the burden of the five senses and doing. He experiences incredible bliss, unlike anything he has ever known. Only then can he comprehend what happiness is, and how much suffering was the tight rope and the two deceptive demons. He also realizes that happiness is the ending of suffering.

Similarly, one is born with a body "tied" tightly around one's mind, with the demons of one's five senses and the doing (will, choice, control, etc.) keeping a firm grip. One has grown up with this, gotten used to it, and so considers it normal. Some even begin to enjoy their five-sense world and get off on doing things, even mentally doing things called thinking. People actually consider this as happiness. Incredible! Even when one practices mindfulness of the five senses, or of will *(cetanā),* one cannot discern their essential suffering nature. How can one, since it has always seemed that "this is the way it is"? Then one day, for the very first time, one enters into a jhāna. The five senses together with the movement of mind called "doing" completely disappear for a while. With their vanishing the body also disappears, and for the first time in this life the mind is free from all doing, all five-sense activity, and free from the burdensome body like a tight rope strangling the beautiful mind. One experiences the bliss of a jhāna, greater than any happiness one has ever known. Only now can one understand what happiness is and what dukkha is. Only now does one realize that the body *is* suffering, that seeing or hearing or smelling or tasting or feelings are each and every time dukkha, and that doing is dukkha through and through. Deep insight into the pervasiveness of dukkha has occurred. And one realizes that the bliss of the jhāna was the result of this immense suffering disappearing for the duration of the jhāna.

Unless one has experience of jhāna, where all five senses have vanished, one will be unable to comprehend that to see a dew-speckled rose in the early morning sunlight is suffering, or to listen to Beethoven's imperious Fifth Symphony is dukkha, or to experience great sex is as painful as being burned. One will deem such statements as madness. But when one knows jhāna from personal experience, one will recognize these statements as being so true. As the Buddha said in the suttas, "What ordinary folk call happiness, the enlightened ones call dukkha" (SN 35,136). Deep insight sees what is inaccessible to ordinary folk, what is incomprehensible to them, and what is often shocking. To see the birth of one's first child might appear as the most wonderful moment of one's life, but only if one knows of nothing better. Jhāna is that something better, and it can change your whole understanding of what is happiness. And, in consequence, it unveils the meaning of dukkha. It literally blows your mind.

The Prison Simile

Another simile, to emphasize the same point, is that of the man who was born and raised in a prison and who has never set foot outside. All he knows is prison life. He would have no conception of the freedom that is beyond his world. And he would not understand that prison is suffering. If anybody suggested that his world was dukkha, he would disagree, for prison is the limit of his experience. But one day he might find the escape tunnel dug long ago that leads beyond the prison walls to the unimaginable and expansive world of real freedom. Only when he has entered that tunnel and escaped from his prison does he realize how much suffering prison actually was, and the end of that suffering, escaping from jail, is happiness.

In this simile the prison is the body, the high prison walls are the five senses, and the relentlessly demanding prison guard is one's own will, the doer. The tunnel dug long ago, through which one escapes, is called jhāna (as at AN IX,42). Only when one has experienced jhāna does one realize that the five-sense world, even at its best, is really a five-walled prison, some parts of it a little more comfortable but still a jail with everyone on death row! Only after deep samādhi does one realize that "will" was the torturer, masquerading as freedom, but preventing one ever resting happily at peace. Only outside of prison can one gain the data that produces the deep insight that discovers the truth about dukkha.

In summary, without experience of jhāna, one's knowledge of the world is too limited to fully understand dukkha, as required by the first noble truth, and proceed to enlightenment.

Deep Insight into Anicca

Insight into the impermanent nature of all things seems so easy. It is obvious that nothing lasts. One doesn't even need to be a meditator to understand this. So if one can be fully enlightened by seeing anicca, why aren't more people enlightened?

It is because one has profoundly invisible blindspots, as in the story of the Vietnam veteran monk. One is blind to phenomena that have always been present without apparent change. Some things are so stable that one doesn't even notice them. These are the blind spots that constitute delusion *(avijjā).* The following similes may help.

The TV Simile

Imagine one is sitting at home watching TV. One can contemplate impermanence watching the box. Scenes come and go, programs come and go, channels come and go. One can even observe the “emptiness channel” when the TV is turned off and one is left with a blank screen. But any insight into impermanence that arises here is superficial. It does not shatter your attachment to the tube.

Similarly, one may contemplate relationships coming and going, days turning into night, flowers fading, bodies aging. But though one sees the impermanence of all these, still one’s cravings are not quelled. Even when one contemplates death, when life has been switched off and all that remains is the inert body, like a dark TV, that too will not explode one’s attachments. Doctors in the morgue and funeral directors see death every workday, but they aren’t enlightened. Such contemplations are helpful, but they are still superficial.

Let us return to the TV and imagine one is sitting at home, watching TV, and contemplating impermanence when, suddenly, not only does the program stop but the whole TV set disappears as well! It completely vanishes in a instant. Television sets are not supposed to do that. It isn’t covered by the warranty. It is absolutely unexpected, shocking, and life changing. This is the stuff of deep insight.

There are some phenomena that one is blind to, whose solid stability one relies on, whose impermanence one just can’t imagine. For example, one’s will, the potential to do things. Even when one suppresses the will, holds it in check in some focused activity, still one knows that the ability to do something, the potential to do, is ever present. One is always in control to some degree.

In deep meditation the will, the potential to do, suddenly vanishes. It is as unexpected, shocking, and weird as seeing one’s television set vanish before one’s very eyes. In jhāna, especially in the second jhāna and beyond, the will ceases but consciousness continues, brighter and clearer than ever. Even the potential to do is gone. One is mindfully frozen. The mind is harder and much more brilliant than a diamond. It is unshakable as emptiness. These are weird experiences but real, exceptionally real. And their message is plain to see, as obvious as a huge neon sign on a moonless dark night; that something one took to be ever present—the potential to do, one’s will—has completely ceased, disappeared into the void. This is what is meant by a deep insight into impermanence. Something unimaginable and upsetting is seen to be true. The “I,” the doer, the will, is subject to stopping, while consciousness continues. After such a deep insight, you will never assume again that you are in charge of you.

The Vanishing Ocean

Imagine watching the waves on the ocean rising and falling, coming and going. It is just like watching pleasant feelings *(vedanā)* and unpleasant feelings rise and fall, come and go. One is contemplating impermanence, true, but only superficially.

Now imagine that one day, as one is contemplating the rise and fall of the waves, suddenly the whole ocean vanishes, taking with it all the land mass that contains the ocean. The whole lot disappears—all gone. Now *that* is deep insight, unimaginable, astonishing, and very upsetting. Oceans aren't meant to suddenly disappear out of existence.

That is what happens in jhāna. One was contemplating the pleasant and unpleasant waves, rising and falling on the ocean of the five senses, and then the whole sea of the five senses completely disappears, taking with it the body that contains the five senses. One has literally gone out of this world, out of this *kāmaloka,* and entered the jhāna realms, *rūpaloka.* One has another level of understanding into the real meaning of anicca and how far it extends. One has deep insight into the cessation of the five sense consciousnesses. Never again will one assume that *I* am the one who sees, who hears, who smells or tastes or touches.

The Eyeball and the Telescope

Imagine looking through a telescope at the stars. Then someone fixes a flat mirror to the end of the instrument, so instead of seeing the heavens, one sees what is doing the looking. Whenever one does this, all one sees is one's own eyeball, always the same. It is so difficult to gain even superficial insight into the impermanence of the one who knows.

Now imagine that when looking at the one doing the looking using the mirrored telescope, suddenly the image of the eyeball completely disappears, taking everything with it, leaving not even emptiness. One soon realizes, after the event has passed by, that if all that is known vanishes, then that which does the knowing must also have vanished. The deep insight arises that the one who knows is impermanent, and that the knower is not me.

This is precisely what happens as one proceeds through the jhānas and the immaterial attainments. The five sense consciousnesses have already disappeared on entering the first jhāna. Now the remaining consciousness, mind consciousness, is peeled away layer by layer. Just before attaining the last of the eight freedoms *(atthavimokha),* the attainment of the cessation of all that is felt or perceived, the last remnant of mind disappears. The "eyeball of the mind," the citta, ceases, and all is gone. Deep insight has discovered that the "one who knows"—the mind, the citta, the ground of all being, *ātman,* whatever each culture calls it—is impermanent, subject to a final ending, which is called *parinibbāna*.

Thus the deep insights into anicca go so much deeper than most meditators expect. When one uses the data of jhāna experiences, one sees the dissolution of the once-solid ground on which so many assumptions of oneself had survived for so long. Whole clusters of self-views topple and crumble. Deep insight soon realizes that there is nothing stable anywhere, anytime, on which a self can stand. Which is no problem anymore, because it is realized that there's no one left to do the standing.

Deep Insight into Anattā

There are three bombshells set off by deep insight, any one of which can demolish the foundations of delusion. They are *dukkha, anicca,* and *anattā,* meaning suffering, impermanence, and no-self. Together, they are called by the Buddha, "the three characteristics of existence." I have shown how deep insight into dukkha and anicca leave one nothing at all to cling to and nowhere to stand. Now I will light the fuse of the third bombshell of insight, the truth of no-self, which has the potential to blow one away literally!

Once again, deep insight into no-self can only occur using the data provided uniquely by jhāna and with a mind empowered by jhāna. One simply cannot close in on these truths employing only rational thinking based on incomplete experience. For instance, some traditions aspire to reach deep insight through a method of reasoned investigation into the question "Who am I?" In the *Sabbāsava Sutta,* the Buddha specifically called such an inquiry "attending unwisely" (MN 2,7). Actually, the relevant Pāli phrase is *"ayoniso manasikāra,"* which literally means "work of the mind that does not go back to the source." The question "Who am I?" does not penetrate deep enough, because it carries with it a mistaken assumption. The inquiry "Who am I?" assumes that a being called "I" exists and, on that questionable premise, only seeks to discover the "who" that being is. Even when one investigates "Who is asking this question?" again one misses the point. It would be more productive to ask, "What is it that I take to be me?" or "What is asking this question?"

In medieval Buddhist India, a famous public debate on no-self occurred between a learned monk and Mahādeva, which went something like this:

LEARNED MONK: Good morning. Who are you?
MAHĀDEVA: Mahādeva.
L.M.: Who is "Mahādeva"?
M.: Me.
L.M.: Who is "Me"?
M.: A dog.
L.M.: Who is "a dog"?
M.: You are!
L.M.: Who is "you"?
M.: Mahādeva.
L.M.: Who is "Mahādeva"?
M.: Me.
L.M.: Who is "me"?
M.: A dog.
L.M.: Who is a "dog"?
M.: You are!

…and so the debate went round and round until the laughter of the audience gave the learned monk an insight. He realized he had allowed himself to be called a dog many times by the clever Mahādeva. This amusing historic dialogue demonstrates how language contains implicit assumptions. The assumptions underlying the words of the two monks were very different. It shows that if you do not frame the question well, you will not receive an adequate answer.

A more productive line of inquiry is to investigate not who but *what* one takes oneself to be, and then ask, does this fit the facts of experience? I might take myself to be a monk, British-Australian, white (or rather patchy pink), fifty-four years of age, healthy, and so on. However, superficial insight can see all these identities as merely temporary, and therefore not the essential "me." As one ages, it becomes increasingly clear that one cannot take oneself to be identical with the disintegrating body. Nor can one take oneself to be a by-product of the brain.

Recent medical research backs up my assertion that the mind is not merely a by-product of the brain. According to researchers,

> Recent studies in cardiac arrest survivors have indicated that although the majority of cardiac arrest survivors have no memory recall from the event, nevertheless, approximately 10% develop memories that are consistent with typical near death experiences [NDE]. These include an ability to "see" and recall specific detailed descriptions of the resuscitation, as verified by the resuscitation staff. Many studies in humans and animals have indicated that brain function ceases during cardiac arrest, thus raising the question how such lucid, well-structured thought processes with reasoning and memory formation can occur at such a time. [12]

> Sabom mentions a young American woman who had complications during brain surgery for a cerebral aneurysm. The EEG of her cortex and brain stem had become totally flat. After the operation, which was eventually successful, this patient proved to have had a very deep NDE, including an out-of-body experience, with subsequently verified observations during the period of the flat EEG.[13]

These two quotes come from separate studies that show the persistence of consciousness after clinical death. The first study was conducted by a team of doctors at Southampton General Hospital in England in 2000, and the second study by a team of doctors in the Netherlands in 2001. The latter study was published in one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world, *The Lancet*. They rigorously researched the occurrence of NDE in those with cardiac arrest. As the authors concluded, "Our results show that medical factors cannot account for the occurrence of NDE…all patients had been clinically dead."[14]

In lay language, these two broad studies uncovered a significant number of cases where the mind was shown to survive the death of the brain. If the mind was only a by-product of the brain, then this would not occur. The fact that consciousness has been found to exist when the brain is no longer functioning is convincing evidence that the mind can be independent of the brain. Another study says:

> The data suggests that in this cardiac arrest model, the NDE arises during unconsciousness. This is a surprising conclusion, because when the brain is so dysfunctional that the patient is deeply comatose, the cerebral structures which underpin subjective

> experience and memory must be severely impaired. Complex experiences such as are reported in the NDE should not arise or be retained in the memory. Such patients would be expected to have no subjective experience (as was the case in 88.8 percent of patients in this study) or at best a confusional state if some brain function is retained. Even if the unconscious brain is flooded with neurotransmitters this should not produce clear, lucid remembered experiences, as those cerebral modules which generate conscious experience and underpin memory are impaired by cerebral anoxia [lack of oxygen]. The fact that in cardiac arrest loss of cortical function precedes the rapid loss of brain stem activity lends further support to this view. [15]

Having dismissed the “usual suspects,” we get to two final candidates for what one takes oneself to be.

The Final Citadel of the Illusion of Self

The last two candidates for selfhood are the doer and the knower. Underneath all the temporary identities, these two lurk as the last stronghold against truth, the final citadel of self-illusion. The unenlightened person, when pressed hard by reason and insight, will eventually fall back on defending their self-existence as either "the one who does" or "the one who knows," if not both. It takes powerful, deep insight based on jhāna to storm this last citadel and see beyond the illusion.

It seems so obvious that one's self is in control. One takes it for granted that it is one's self that chooses to listen to music, watch TV, or read something. It appears true to experience that one's self generates one's will. Unfortunately, what seems obvious is often untrue.

The neuroscientist Benjamin Libet of the University of California in San Francisco asked volunteers to extend one of their arms and, whenever they felt like it, out of their own free will, to flex their wrist. A clock allowed the subjects to note exactly when they decided to act, and by fitting electrodes to their wrists, the start of the action could be timed. More electrodes on the volunteers' scalps recorded a particular brain wave pattern called the "readiness potential," which occurs just before any complex action and is associated with the brain planning its next move. It was found that the conscious decision to act came *after* the readiness potential![16] The inescapable conclusion of this experiment is that what we can observe as "the decision to act," what we take to be our own free will, occurs only after the process of action has begun. "Will" does not initiate the action but is a by-product of the process.

Such hard evidence is hard to accept. It goes against one's basic assumptions of life. It even evokes fear in some persons when they imagine the possibility that they are not in charge of either their body or their mind. Even strong scientific evidence is not powerful enough to destroy the illusion of will. One needs jhāna to see directly that it is not a self that generates the will but an empty process of cause and effect.

Meditation can well be summarized as going into the center of things. One goes first to the center of time, called the "now." Then into the center of the now that is free of all thought. Then into the center of the body with one's breath. Then into the center of the breath, which is the beautiful breath. Then into the center of the beautiful breath, where one experiences the nimitta. Then into the center of the nimitta to enter the first jhāna. Then into the center of the first jhāna, which is the second jhāna, and so on. This is *yoniso manasikāra,* "work of the mind that goes to the source." As one goes deeper into the source of body and mind, one comes to the source of will, the seat of the doer, the citadel in which potential doing abides. And one sees it all empty of a self.

The Simile of the Driverless Bus

If one’s life is compared to a bus journey, with the bus representing our body and mind, the bus driver our will, and the view from the window our experience of pleasure and suffering, then most would agree that we’re in a bus with a pretty bad driver. For sometimes our bus goes through some very pleasant scenery, and our hopeless driver doesn’t even stop but even accelerates faster. Just as life’s happy times never seem to last as long as we want them to. Then at other times our bus goes through some ghastly territory, and our incompetent driver doesn’t speed out as fast as possible but slows down and even stalls. Just as life’s very unhappy moments seem to last longer than they should. There comes a point when we need to find this inept driver, our will, and train it to travel only to happy lands, lingering slowly there, and avoid or race out of the toxic-waste dumps of life. It takes a long spiritual inner journey to find the bus driver’s seat, the source of one’s will. It is found in the jhāna. However, when one gets there, one has the shock of one’s life. The driver’s seat is empty. Life, my friend, is a driverless bus!

The result of seeing that there is no one driving the bus is to go back to one’s seat, sit down quietly, and stop complaining. There is no one to complain to anymore. Beautiful experiences come and go, painful experiences come and go, and one just sits there with equanimity. Complaining, otherwise known as discontent, a.k.a. craving for happiness, has finally ceased.

Craving is like an arm with two ends, which reaches out to grab things or push them away. Too often, meditators only observe the objects of craving—loved ones or possessions or chocolate and so on. They are looking at the wrong end of the arm. One should look at *this* end of the arm, the thing doing the craving. The process doing the craving is the delusion of self. When there is the delusion of self, there will always be craving. Craving is how the delusion expresses itself. When one sees with deep insight that the driver’s seat is empty, that there is no “doer,” then the delusion is exploded and craving soon stops. For there is nothing left to do the craving.

Some clever students ask me, if the driver’s seat of our bus is empty, why should I bother practicing? What is the point of effort? The answer is that, because the driver’s seat of your bus is empty, you have no choice but to practice! Effort is part of the journey. But always remember that striving is generated from many other causes, it does not come from your self.

The Buddha's Word on the One Who Knows

Even some good, practicing monks fail to breach illusion's last line of defense, the knower. They take "the one who knows," "the original mind," "the pure knowing," or some other descriptions of the citta as the ultimate and permanent reality. To be accurate, such concepts belong to the teachings of Hinduism and not to Buddhism, for the Buddha clearly refuted these theories as not penetrating deeply enough.

For instance, in the first sutta in the first collection of Buddhist scriptures, the *Brahmajāla Sutta,* the Buddha described in detail sixty-two types of wrong view *(micchā diṭṭhi).* Wrong view number eight is the opinion that the thing that is called *citta,* or *mind (mano),* or *consciousness (viññāṇa)* is the permanent self *(attā)*—stable, eternal, not subject to change, forever the same (DN 1,2,13). Thus maintaining that "the one who knows" is eternal is *micchā diṭṭhi,* wrong view, says the Buddha.

In the *Nidāna Saṃyutta,* the Buddha states:

> But, bhikkhus, that[17] which is called "mind" *[citta]* and "mentality" *[mano]* and "consciousness" *[viññāṇa]*—the uninstructed worldling is unable to experience revulsion towards it, unable to become dispassionate towards it and be liberated from it. For what reason? Because for a long time this has been held to by him, appropriated, and grasped thus: "This is mine, this I am, this is self."…
>
> It would be better, bhikkhus, for the uninstructed worldling to take as self *[attā]* this body…because this body…is seen standing…for [as long as] a hundred years, or even longer. But that which is called "mind" and "mentality" and "consciousness" arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night. (SN 12,61)[18]

However, just as the hard scientific evidence mentioned earlier cannot dislodge the view that it is oneself who is the doer, so even the hard scriptural evidence of the Buddha's own teachings is unable on its own to dislodge the view that "the one who knows" is the ultimate entity, the attā. Some even argue that these Buddhist texts must have been changed, solely on the grounds that the texts disagree with their view![19]

Such irrational stubbornness comes from *bhavataṇhā,* the craving to be. Bhavataṇhā is so strong that one is prepared to let go of almost everything—possessions, one's body, and one's thoughts—as long as one is finally left with something, some tiny spot of existence, in order to be. After all, one wants to enjoy parinibbāna, thoroughgoing extinction, having worked so hard to get there. Bhavataṇhā is why many great meditators are unable to agree with the Buddha and make that final leap of renunciation that lets go of absolutely everything, including the citta. Even though the Buddha said that "nothing is worth adhering to" *(sabbe dhammā nālam abhinivesāya)* (MN 37,3), people still adhere to the citta. They continue to hold on to the knower and elevate it to unwarranted levels of mystical profundity by calling it "the ground of all being," "union with God," "the original mind," etc.—even though the Buddha strongly refuted all such clinging, saying that all levels of being stink, the way even a tiny speck of feces on one's hand stinks (AN I,18,13).

One needs the experiences of many jhānas, combined with a sound knowledge of the Buddha's own teachings, in order to break through the barrier of bhavataṇhā, the craving to be, and see for oneself that what some call "the citta," "mind," "consciousness," or "the one who knows" is only an empty process, one that is fueled by the craving to be and blinded by the delusion of permanence, but which is clearly of the nature to cease absolutely and leave nothing at all remaining.

Deep Insight into the Citta

It is the mind, the citta, that rules all conscious activity. Sight might be assumed to be capable of seeing on its own, but in fact it is the mind sense, which immediately follows seeing, that makes knowing what is seen possible. Sight on its own does not register. As the Buddha said (SN 48,42), the mind can appropriate for itself any of the events in the five senses, as well as its own unique field of experience. Since the mind consciousness follows every recognizable event of the five sense consciousnesses, these five sense consciousnesses carry an illusion of sameness. There appears to be something similar in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Once one has come face to face with the citta in jhāna, one recognizes that it is the accompanying citta that gives the illusion of continuity to the stream of consciousness.

The Granular Nature of the Citta

One now realizes that just as the stream of consciousness is granular, so is that component of the stream that is the citta. As noted earlier, sand on a beach appears continuous. Looking closely, however, one sees that the beach consists of tiny grains of silica. Looking even closer, one can see spaces between each grain, so that they aren't even touching. The citta has this same granular quality. Instead of appearing as a continuous entity, it is now clearly recognized as made up of series of individual "knowings," cittas or mind events, packed closely together and related to their neighbors by cause and effect. One can even discern that there is a gap between the mind events, between each knowing, where the citta has completely vanished from existence for a while.

That should be sufficient for deep insight to arise. Based on much experience of jhāna, one sees that even the undefiled citta is impermanent, a parade of individual mind-particles, and subject to cessation. One makes the great breakthrough and realizes that "the one who knows," "the knowing," "the mind," or "the undefiled citta" is merely a process empty of any essence or self. Moreover, it is a process driven by cause and effect: since all cittas are subject to arising, they are also subject to complete cessation. As the Buddha observed, "Whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is subject to cessation" *(yaṅkiñci samudaya-dhammaṁ, sabban taṁ nirodha-dhammanti)* (SN 56,11).

The Fading Away of the Citta

When one experiences not just the first jhāna but also several higher jhānas, one will have sufficient data to recognize that a feature of each higher jhāna is an incremental fading away *(virāga)* of the citta. As one proceeds through the jhānas and the immaterial attainments, that which knows is seen to experience less and less. One realizes that if the path into the first jhāna implies a letting go of the five sense consciousnesses, then the path through the ascending jhānas entails a letting go of the mind consciousness, the citta.

For instance, in the fourth immaterial attainment, the citta has almost entirely disappeared. That is why this state is called "neither perception nor nonperception." The citta, as it were, stands on the edge of its own ending. Once it proceeds beyond that edge, it is called *saññā-vedayitanirodha,* "cessation of feeling and perception." Here, what was but a moment before the most refined manifestation of the citta possible is now extinguished. It vanishes, ceases—it "nibbānas."

Upon emerging from the state of cessation, either one is completely enlightened, an arahant, or else one is almost completely enlightened, a nonreturner *(anāgāmī).* The temporary extinction of that which knows, the citta, is so pronounced that deep insight must occur. One recognizes that everything has stopped, with nothing at all remaining. Such a deep insight has as its inevitable consequence the third or the fourth stage of enlightenment.

Even when one has not gone as far as this "attainment of extinction" *(nirodha samāpatti),* one may use the data of just one or two jhānas to infer that it is the nature of this citta to cease. One has already seen the first fadings of the citta, and now one can extrapolate to realize the full fading away of the knower. Moreover, the more the citta disappears, the more peaceful it is and the more sublime. Should one aspire to the most peaceful and most sublime, then one will direct one's mind to ceasing. As the suttas say, having experienced a jhāna, one realizes that "this full fading is the peaceful; this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all objects of attachment, the destruction of craving, fading, cessation, nibbāna. Standing upon that, one attains the destruction of the outflowings of the mind. But if he does not attain the destruction of the outflowings [as an arahant]*,* he becomes a nonreturner" (MN 64,15).

What is the pure, undefiled, and radiant citta? In the suttas, the Buddha consistently described the mind on emerging from the jhānas as "pure and undefiled" (MN 51,24). A citta that is free of the five hindrances is also called "radiant" *(pabhassara)* (SN 46,33). Therefore, the pure, undefiled, and radiant citta, according to the Buddha, refers to the mind on emerging from the jhānas.

The deep insight that catalyzes enlightenment, according to many suttas, is the realization that even this purest, completely undefiled, and radiant citta is dependently originated, impermanent, and subject to extinction. For instance, in the *Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta* (MN 52), Ven. Ānanda is asked what one thing does the Buddha proclaim as the door to enlightenment. Ven. Ānanda answered that the Buddha proclaimed eleven entrances to enlightenment, all requiring a jhāna as the trigger for deep insight:"He considers this and understands it thus:'This first [or second, third, and so on] jhāna is conditioned and volitionally produced. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to cessation.' Standing upon that he attains [full enlightenment or the state of the nonreturner]."[20]

In the simile of the grains of sand, one sees not only that the beach is comprised of individual grains that are not even touching but that a cause-and-effect relationship put the grains there in the first place. One understands how the sea deposits sand particles and takes them away, how it smoothes and packs the beach with sand. In the same way, when one looks closely at the purified citta, one can recognize the cause-and-effect relationship that produces this citta. One understands how craving and its partner, volition, deposit individual cittas (moments of mind) and take them away, how they smooth the citta and defile it, just as the polluted seawater can sometimes deposit oil and other flotsam on the sand. Here one discerns, in particular, how the craving to exist packs the sequence of individual cittas tightly into our stream of consciousness, filling in every empty space to give the illusion of continuity and permanence. Having seen this so clearly for oneself, one understands that even the pure citta is conditioned and impermanent. It is not an independent, self-sustaining essence. It is not the unconditioned. Having seen that the most purified and radiant form of knowing in all forms of existence is impermanent, one knows how much more so are all other forms of citta. One has experienced the deep insight that the citta, the one that knows, the mind, or whatever else one calls it, will not persist forever. When the causes that sustain the flow of mind moments cease, when the craving to be is destroyed, then the mindstream will run out of fuel. It will cease completely, and that is called parinibbāna, complete extinction.

Where Does the Pure Citta Go?—a Stupid Question

When the wanderer Vacchagotta asked what happens to the liberated mind *(vimutta citta)* after the death of an arahant, the Buddha replied using the simile of a fire (MN 72,19). A fire burns in dependence on its fuel. It is conditioned. When the fuel is used up, the fire is extinguished *(nibbuta)*. It makes no sense to ask where the fire goes after it has been extinguished. It likewise makes no sense to ask where the liberated citta goes after an arahant has been extinguished. That would be a stupid question. As we saw earlier, the famous bhikkhunī arahant Paṭācārā gained her deep insight that produced full enlightenment while watching an oil lamp being extinguished (Thig 116). She saw the essential similarity of the flame and the citta, how they are both dependently originated, and just as the flame had "nibbāna-ed," so the citta must do the same.

The liberated citta, like that of the arahant, can be compared to a shooting star. For untold millions of years, a piece of cosmic rock or ice had been going around and around our solar system, orbiting in the bright and dark spaces. Just like the stream of consciousness, the knower and the doer, have been wandering for untold millions of lifetimes, a piece of cosmic emptiness going around and around saṃsāra, being born and dying in the bright and dark worlds. Then the piece of rock or ice meets our planet, enters the atmosphere, and burns in brilliance as a radiant and pure shooting star before being extinguished forever. Just like that which we call a "person" meets the true Dhamma, the deep insight into the emptiness of the doer and knower, and the citta blazes in brilliance and radiance, with the certain knowledge that it will soon be extinguished —nibbāna-ed—forever.

As the famous *Ratana Sutta* (Sn 235) says:

> The old is destroyed, the new is not arising.
>
> Those whose minds [citta] are disgusted with future existence,
>
> Their seeds (of rebirth) have been destroyed, (and) they have no desire for growth.
>
> The wise are quenched, just like this lamp.[21]

Or as two great arahants in the Theragāthā said,

> Made to turn around, the citta will right here be destroyed!
>
> *(Thag 184—Sivaka Thera)*

You, citta, will certainly perish!

(Thag 1144—Tālaputa Thera)

Deep Insight and *Satipaṭṭhāna*

The Buddha taught the four focuses of mindfulness, or satipaṭṭhāna, as both a support for the attainment of jhāna as well as a means for gaining deep insight into no-self, anattā

The latter practice, penetrating no-self, relies on already having experienced a jhāna. This is why each satipaṭṭhāna begins with the prerequisite *"vineyya loke abhijjhā-domanassam,"* which, as explained in chapter 8, means having already abandoned the five hindrances. As the *Naḷakapāna Sutta* (MN 68,6) confirms, it is one of the functions of jhānas to stop these five hindrances from "invading the mind and remaining." One needs mindfulness empowered by jhāna for deep insight to occur.

The purpose of satipaṭṭhāna is revealed in the passage repeated at the end of each practice, where, having contemplated the causal arising and causal ceasing of these phenomena, one realizes that "there is just a body," "just vedanā," "just citta," or "just mental objects," all cause-and-effect processes that cannot be taken as me, mine, or myself. Thus "one abides not hanging on to anything *(anissita),* not taking up anything in the world" (MN 10). In other words, the function of satipaṭṭhāna is to win the deep insight into no-self, anattā.

In this chapter, I gave special attention to the fourth and the third satipaṭṭhāna. This is because the innermost and nearly inaccessible lair of delusion is where the doer and the knower reside. The investigation into the conditioned and empty nature of the doer belongs to the fourth satipaṭṭhāna. Deep insight into the impermanent and dependent nature of the knower is the whole of the third satipaṭṭhāna. So what I have described at length as deep insight is no more than the satipaṭṭhāna empowered by jhāna.

A Last Word from Ajahn Chah

When my teacher, Ajahn Chah, began feeling sick, we Western monks built a sauna for him at Wat Pa Nanachat. Ajahn Chah would come over from his own monastery, Wat Pa Pong, to take a sauna once a week. Thus, not only could we do service to our teacher, but our teacher could also do service to us by sharing some Dhamma teachings. In fact, he would usually give a talk to us each week before going to the sauna, with us monks accompanying him afterward to help him in the sauna.

On one occasion, Ajahn Chah had given such an inspiring talk that, instead of accompanying my teacher to the sauna as was my usual habit, I slipped around the back of the hall and sat in meditation. I had such a lovely meditation, so deep that I lost all sense of time. When I came out with a big smile on my face, I thought of my teacher. Perhaps there was still some time to go to the sauna and do some service, like rinsing his bathing cloth. So I walked to the sauna.

I was too late. Ajahn Chah had already finished, because I met him along the path leading to the sauna. He was returning to his car. Ajahn Chah stopped and looked right through me, with a gaze that only accomplished meditators possess. I assumed that he had noticed my relaxed features and smile and deduced that I had just emerged from a deep meditation. So it was that the great Ajahn Chah tried to enlighten me.

“Brahmavamso!” he demanded, with a thrust of his voice like a stab with a sword. “Why?”

I hesitated. I understood the question, but the answer was too distant from me.

So I replied, “I don’t know, sir.”

Ajahn Chah’s probing features loosened, and he laughed.

“I’ll tell you the answer anyway,” he said. “Should anyone ask you ‘Why?’ the answer is ‘There is nothing.’”

That blew me away. I was stunned. It impressed me so much that I can picture the encounter clearly even now as I write this, even though it was more than twenty years ago.

Ajahn Chah pressed me further, “Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied confidently.

"No you don't!" he laughed back, and then continued on his way to the car.

This was conveyed to me by the most compassionate and wise master that I have known. He summed up what this chapter on deep insight is all about. When probed with jhāna-empowered mindfulness, the big question "Why?" produces one and only one correct answer: "There is nothing"!

Do you understand?

No, you don't.

14

Enlightenment: Entering the Stream

> *This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. But this generation delights in attachment, takes delight in attachment, and rejoices in attachment. It is hard for such a generation to see this truth, namely, specific conditionality, dependent origination.And it is hard to see this truth, namely, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna.*
>
> *—the Buddha, just after his enlightenment* [22]

A LTHOUGH ENLIGHTENMENT, which is the realization of nibbāna, is hard to attain, it is not impossible. There are monks alive today who have experienced the real thing. According to the Buddha's teaching to the wanderer Subhadda in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16,5,27), wherever the complete noble eightfold path is practiced well, there one will find stream winners, once-returners, nonreturners, and fully enlightened arahants. But where an incomplete path is practiced—where, for example, jhāna is discarded, leaving a sevenfold path, or all virtue (right speech, action, and livelihood) is discarded for a fivefold path—enlightened ones will not be found. Today a wholehearted commitment to a complete eightfold path is found in a few monastic communities that are devoted to both seclusion and sense restraint. Only there are enlightened ones found.

What Nibbāna Is Not

The above may be hard to accept, but it is true—just as the Buddha's teaching of nibbāna as cessation is hard to accept but true. In this chapter I will explain enlightenment as the Buddha meant it to be taught, that is, with precision and clarity. I will also describe the final parts of the process during which it occurs. But first I will comment on what nibbāna is not.

Dumbing Down Nibbāna

Whenever Buddhism becomes fashionable, there is a tendency to change the meaning of nibbāna to suit more people. The pressures born of popularity will bend the truth to make it more accommodating. Teachings are very well received when they tell people only what they want to hear. Furthermore, vanity induces some Dhamma teachers to explain nibbāna in ways that do not challenge their own unenlightened state. This all leads to a dumbing down of nibbāna.

One can read in modern Buddhist literature that enlightenment is nothing more than a passive submission to the way things seem to be (as distinguished from the way things truly are, seen only after jhāna). Or that the unconditioned is merely the easily accessible mindfulness-in-the-moment, within which anything goes—absolutely anything. Or that the deathless state is simply a nondual awareness, a rejection of all distinctions, and an affirmation that all is one and benign. The supreme goal of Buddhism then becomes little more than the art of living in a less troubled way, a hopeless surrender to the ups and downs of life, and a denial of dukkha as inherent in all forms of existence. It is like a neurotic prisoner celebrating his incarceration instead of seeking the way out. Such dumbed-down Dhamma may feel warm and fuzzy, but it is a gross understatement of the real nibbāna. And those who buy into such enchanting distortions will find they have bought a lemon.

Banana Nibbāna

When I was a teenager, I asked many Christian teachers to explain the meaning of God. Either they would tell me what it was not or they would give me an answer that was unintelligible. For example, they would say God is “the ineffable” or “the ultimate reality” or “the ground of all being” or “infinite consciousness” or “the pure knowing.”

Later I asked many Buddhist teachers to explain the meaning of nibbāna. Either they would tell me what it was not or they would give me an answer that was unintelligible. For instance, they would say nibbāna is “the ineffable” or “the ultimate reality” or “the ground of all being” or “unbounded consciousness” or “the pure knowing.” Then insight arose: I’ve heard such mumbo-jumbo somewhere before! For the very same reasons that I rejected meaningless descriptions of God as a youth, so even now I reject all the gobbledygook descriptions of the Buddhist nibbāna.

Some definitions of nibbāna are plain oxymorons, such as, for example, “nonmanifest consciousness” or “attuning to the ungraspable.” Consciousness is that essential part of the cognitive process that makes experience manifest, so “nonmanifest consciousness” actually means “nonmanifest manifesting” or “unconscious consciousness,” which is nonsense. One can only attune to what is possible for the mind to grasp, so the latter definition becomes “attuning to the unattunable” or “grasping the ungraspable.” These and other similar descriptions are mere foolishness dressed up as wisdom.

The underlying problem is that it is very embarrassing to a Buddhist not to have a clear idea of what nibbāna is. It is like getting on a bus and not being quite sure where the bus is going. It is worse when your non-Buddhist friends ask you to describe where you are heading on your Buddhist journey. So, many Buddhists resort to obfuscation, meaning bamboozling their audience with unusual combinations of mystical-sounding phrases. For if your listeners don’t understand what you’re saying, then there is a good chance that they’ll think it profound and consider you wise!

Such crooked descriptions of nibbāna are so lacking in straightforwardness, so bent out of line, that I call them “banana nibbāna.” Experience tells us that, when one knows a thing well and has had frequent and direct experience of it, then one will be able to supply a clear, detailed, and straightforward description. Mystification is the sure sign that the speaker does not know what they’re talking about.

Demystified Nibbāna

Here, I will give three complementary descriptions of nibbāna: (1) nibbāna as the highest happiness; (2) nibbāna as the complete ending of sensory desire, ill will, and delusion; and (3) nibbāna as the remainderless cessation of this process we call body and mind. These three depictions, all from the Buddha, give a clear and precise portrait of nibbāna. Once one has understood what enlightenment is, then one will easily recognize the path leading there, and all the teachings of the Buddha will become extraordinarily transparent.

The Highest Happiness

The Buddha said, “Nibbāna is the highest happiness” (Dhp 203, 204). This is, perhaps, the most helpful description of enlightenment. Not only is it straightforward and lacking in gibberish, it is also very appealing. It reveals why men and women have been striving for nibbāna throughout the past twenty-six centuries. We all want happiness, and if the highest happiness is on offer, then that’s what we want. Thus Buddhism’s perennial teaching is how to be happier and happier, until one reaches the summit of all happiness in this very life: nibbāna.

These days, I present the Buddha’s special teaching of the four noble truths having rearranged them. I have found that if I begin with the noble truth of suffering, then my audience is turned off. They know enough about that already in their lives. They didn’t give up their evening to come and listen to more suffering. As any salesperson knows, first impressions are paramount. Therefore I introduce the four noble truths as follows:

1. Happiness
2. The path leading to happiness
3. Unhappiness
4. The cause of unhappiness

This is essentially the same as the Buddha’s teaching, but reordered for greater impact. Some might call this rearrangement “marketing,” but it emphasizes the goal of Buddhism by placing it first.

Nibbāna portrayed as the highest happiness also reveals that the noble eightfold path is the way of ever-increasing happiness. Those who follow the path wholeheartedly get happier. As the Buddha said in the *Araṇavibhanga Sutta,* “One should know how to define pleasure, and knowing that, one should pursue pleasure within oneself.”[23] One pursues such inner pleasure, which is jhāna, without fear until one reaches the highest happiness.

What is the highest happiness that you have experienced? Drugs? Sex? Music? Falling in love? Seeing the birth of your first child? You will find that the happiness of jhāna exceeds all of these. That is why one’s first experience of jhāna blows apart all one’s old conceptions about the meaning of happiness. Jhāna provides deep insight into happiness. Not that jhāna is the highest happiness, but it is so close that, as we said earlier, the Buddha called it *sambodhi sukha,* “the bliss of enlightenment.”[24] From jhāna one proceeds to a happiness a little bit higher, and that is nibbāna.

Recent scientific studies support the assertions that meditation makes one happier and that Buddhist monks may be the happiest people of all.[25] Therefore, anyone who wants a really good time should be a really good meditator. And if one wants the highest happiness of all, then go for nibbāna.

The Complete Ending of Sensory Desire, Ill Will, and Delusion

The Buddha's chief disciple, Ven. Sāriputta, defined *nibbāna* as the complete ending of sensory desire, ill will, and delusion (SN 3 8,1). This story of the wishing game illustrates this definition well.

Five children were playing a wishing game. Each would be asked in turn,"If you had a wish, what would it be?" The child with the best wish would win. The first child said, "If I had a wish, I would wish for some chocolate ice cream," because it was a hot day and he liked ice cream.

The second child said,"If I had a wish, I would wish for an ice cream factory. Then I can have many ice creams, whenever I want!" The first child sat glumly, regretting that he had wished for only one ice cream and thinking how clever the second child was.

The third child said, "My wish is for a billion dollars. With a billion bucks, I can buy my own ice-cream factory, a candy store, and my own fast-food restaurant, then I can have a burger and double fries whenever I want, and my Mom won't be able to stop me! I'll also have enough money left over to buy anything else I want, as soon as I think of it." Now the second child felt stupid, having settled for only an ice-cream factory, while thinking how much smarter this third child was, wishing for a billion dollars.

The fourth child said,"If I had a wish, then I'd wish for three wishes! With my first wish, I'd get my ice-cream factory. With my second wish, I'd get a billion dollars, and for my third wish, I'd ask for three more wishes! That way, I can go on wishing forever." Even the child who'd wished for a billion dollars now felt beaten. All the first three children looked up to this fourth child as a genius. What could be superior to unlimited wishes?

The fifth child surpassed them all. He said quietly, "If I had a wish, I would wish that I was so content that I would never need any more wishes!"

That last child won the wishing game, just as those who sit perfectly still win the human race. He understood that the highest happiness, nibbāna, is the complete ending of all sensory desire, ill will, and delusion. Nibbāna is contentment at last.

There are two types of freedom found in the world: freedom *of* desire and freedom *from* desire. The first is symbolized by the fourth child's infinity of wishes, and it is the type of freedom that is worshipped in our materialistic societies as the ultimate goal. Modern governments strive to give their people unlimited freedom of desire, with wealth, rights, and liberty. However, their people are mostly dissatisfied. The second type of freedom is symbolized by the fifth child's eternal contentment. Only spiritual paths like Buddhism worship freedom from desire. Nibbāna is the perfect form of this second type of freedom; for the complete ending of sensory desire, ill will, and delusion is the freedom from *all* desire. It is the ending of craving. Peace. Enlightenment.

The Remainderless Cessation of Body and Mind

In the time of the Buddha, even simple villagers understood the meaning of nibbāna. For *nibbāna* was the word in common usage for an oil lamp being extinguished (see *Ratana Sutta*, Sn 235). When the oil was used up, or the wick had burned out, or a wind had carried the heat away, the villagers would say that the flame had "nibbāna-ed." *Nibbāna* was the word in ordinary usage that described the remainderless ending of a natural process, whether it was a simple flame, or this complex body and mind…or a fashionable curiosity box:

I was told that in the late 1970s in California it was trendy to have a small metal box on one's coffee table as a conversation piece. The rectangular box was plain on all sides except for a simple switch on the front. When one's guest inquired what the box did, they were invited to turn it on. As soon as the switch was flicked on, the whirring of a motor and the rumbling of cogwheels could be heard from inside. Then a flap would rise up on one side, and a mechanical arm would emerge from within. The metal arm would extend, bend around the corner to the front, and then turn off the switch. Then it would retreat back inside its box, the flap would close, and all would be quiet once again. It was a box whose sole purpose was to switch itself off. To me, it is the most wonderful metaphor for nibbāna!

The purpose of this process we call "body and mind" is to switch itself off. Peace at last.

Of course, one is capable of appreciating the delightful accuracy of this metaphor only if one has had direct experience of the utter emptiness of this whole process called "body and mind." The crucial deep insight is that there is no one in here, out there, or anywhere, for that matter. The doer (will) and the knower (consciousness) are just natural processes. When one penetrates to the heart of this insight, then there is nothing at all to lose and nothing to be annihilated. Only when there is some persistent entity there to begin with can we use the word *annihilate* . But for the remainderless ending of an empty natural process, we use the word *cessation*. Nibbāna is the empty and natural process of body and mind doing its cessation thing.

> Mere suffering exists, no sufferer is found;
> The deeds are, but no doer of the deeds is there;
> Nibbāna is, but not the person that enters it;
> The path is, but no traveler on it is seen.
>
> *(Vsm 16,90)*

The First Experience of Nibbāna—Stream Winning

After much wholehearted practice of the complete noble eightfold path, there comes a time when one reflects back on what it all means. After a recent experience of jhāna, one has the superpower mindfulness that is capable of holding any object for investigation motionless for long periods of time. The hindrances of restlessness and sloth-and-torpor are well gone. The mind is brilliantly clear and still. It is charged with inner happiness, so potently present that it easily overcomes whatever fear arises as mindfulness goes deep into unfamiliar places. It is bliss that makes the mind courageous, heroic, and unstoppable in its quest for truth. At other times, one came close to the elusive "way things truly are," but fear, desire, and aversion turned the mind away. But now, after dwelling in jhāna, there is no desire, no aversion, and no vested self-interests to protect. Using the recollection of the jhāna for one's data, one bores relentlessly into the center of things. Bold and brilliant, the mind breaks through to the origin of experience, what I have called the citadel of the self, ruled by the two lords the doer and the knower. There, one sees for the first time, with unambiguous certainty, that this citadel is completely empty!

Such experience of deep insight is totally different than anything one can imagine. As the Buddha said in the *Sappurisa Sutta,* in reference to jhāna but equally applicable to stream winning, "For however they imagine it will be, the experience is always other than that" (MN 113,21). There occurs a tremendous paradigm shift. Just as the shifting of the earth's tectonic plates produces a massive earthquake, so the shifting of fundamental standpoints for one's views is like a terrific earthquake in the mind. Many ancient and cherished constructions of concepts and views come crashing to the ground. Such high-powered deep insight feels like an explosion in the mind. For a while, one does not know where to stand. One is certain one hasn't gone mad. In fact, the mind feels more sane than it ever has felt before. It is so clear, still, and blissful. One of the necessary signs of deep insight is the ensuing long period of sustained and delicious bliss. After his enlightenment, the Buddha is said to have sat without moving for seven days, made motionless by the extreme bliss of liberation (Vin 1,1,1).

After some time, maybe even days, it is as if the dust finally settles. Euphoria's blinding light diminishes enough for one to discriminate again. One looks to see what edifices are left standing and what is no longer there. If it is stream winning *(sotāpatti)* one will distinctly see that all illusions of a self or of an essence, personal or universal, have been completely annihilated, now and forever.

After *sotāpatti,* it all seems so obvious. The wonder is that one was so densely stupid as to not see through this blatant deception even earlier. This truth of no-essence is explicitly articulated again and again in the Buddha's teachings. Now one realizes that, because of wishful thinking, denial, and the other five hindrances, one had been filtering all that one had read, bending and interpreting it, to get only what one wanted to hear from the Buddha's words. Delusion is so incredibly powerful, much more pervasive than most people know. As Voltaire quipped, "The only way to comprehend the mathematical concept of infinity is to contemplate the extent of human stupidity."

Now the illusion is revealed, and delusion begins to unravel. Having penetrated to the core of anattā, one is now able to know the full extent of dukkha. Previously, one would recoil from accepting that all things are dukkha. This was because the illusion of self demanded at least one corner of existence where dukkha doesn't apply, some heavenly realm of perfect happiness, whether it be the "original mind," "merging with the one," or whatever other spiritual fantasy is on offer. Everything else might be dukkha, but not this one exempt niche that the illusion of self reserves for its ultimate "retirement home." But once one has seen the absolute emptiness of all phenomena, both inner and outer, then one has no need of such a retirement home. The vested interest in one's own continuance is destroyed. Denial is undermined. One now agrees fully with the Buddha's explicit teaching that *"sabbe sankhārā dukkhā"* (Dhp 278), all phenomena are suffering, the whole unredeemable lot.

Furthermore, seeing the body and mind as void of a persistent entity means that this whole process can come to a remainderless end without anything being lost. It is fascinating to observe so many sincere Buddhists wanting to keep something for themselves after enlightenment. Preserving something for oneself is called "attachment," even when it is clinging to something refined. However, after stream winning, all such attachments that arise from a view of the self are finally eliminated. One realizes that all experiences are only phenomena that arise due to causes and, therefore, must one day come to a complete cessation. And this includes the body and mind. The full understanding of anicca, as said in the previous chapter, is not merely seeing things rise and fall like waves on the ocean but seeing the whole ocean disappear together with the landmass that contains it. To know anicca fully, one must see such cessation. And this knowledge follows seamlessly from the uncovering of anattā, no-self. Thus, in the suttas, one finds many a new stream winner expressing their attainment in the words:

> Whatever arises, all that will [one day]
> completely cease.
>
> *(SN 56,11)*

Thus, the full penetration of anattā permits the mind's full penetration of dukkha and anicca as well. The event of stream winning is the realization that all experience, including that which knows the experience, is anicca, dukkha, and anattā, "subject to cessation, suffering, and without a persisting essence." These famous three characteristics of existence pervade everything. Thus it is also the nature of body and mind to cease one day with nothing remaining.

Making Something Out of Nothing

As I’ve just noted, some people are so attached to existence that they see nibbāna as a kind of retirement home for the one who knows. Such people will assume “nowhere” to be a place name, “emptiness” to be a precious solid entity, and “cessation” to be the beginning of something wonderful. They try to make something out of nothing.

It is a problem with language that when we describe what a thing is not, what qualities are absent, then the negation or the absence can easily be misunderstood as a thing in itself. For example, in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*,[26] the White King asks Alice whether she could see either of his messengers on the road.“I see nobody on the road,” said Alice. “I only wish I had such eyes,” the king remarked in a fretful tone, “To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it’s as much as I can do to see real people, by this light!” Then, after a messenger did arrive, the king asked him, “Who did you pass on the road?” “Nobody,” said the messenger.“Quite right,” said the king,“this young lady saw him too. So of course Nobody was slower than you.”“I do my best,” the messenger said in a sullen tone, “I’m sure nobody walks much faster than I do!”“He can’t do that,” said the king,“or else he’d have been here first.”

There is a similar story in Buddhism, regarding an early episode in the life of the great disciple of the Buddha, Anuruddha. As a result of a great act of good kamma in one of Anuruddha’s previous existences, in this life he would always receive the goods he wanted (Dhp-a 5:17). One day, the young Anuruddha was playing at marbles with his friends and gambling the contents of his lunch basket on the result. Unfortunately, he kept on losing until he had no lunch left. Being from a very wealthy family, he ordered his servant to take his lunch basket back home and bring back some more cakes. Soon after the servant returned, he lost these cakes too. So, for a second time the servant was sent back home for more food, and a second time Anuruddha lost the cakes gambling at marbles. He ordered the servant a third time to take the basket back to his house and ask his mother for some more cakes. However, by now his mother had run out of cakes. So she instructed the servant to return to her son with the empty lunch basket and tell Anuruddha,“*Natthi* cakes!” *Natthi* is the Pāli word for “there isn’t any.”

While the servant was taking the empty basket back to Anuruddha, the *devas* (heavenly beings) realized that if they didn’t intervene, Anuruddha would not receive something he wanted. Since this could not happen because of the good kamma Anuruddha had done in a previous life, the devas secretly inserted some heavenly cakes into the empty basket.

When the servant arrived, he handed the basket to his young master, saying, “Natthi cakes, sir!” But when Anuruddha opened the basket, the aroma of the heavenly cakes was so enticing that he couldn’t resist trying one. They were so delicious that he asked his mother to give him only natthi cakes from then on.

In truth,“natthi cakes,” when devas don’t get involved, means no cakes at all. Just as *ajātaṁ,* when wishful thinkers don’t get involved, means nothing born at all, *abhūtaṁ* means nothing come to be, *akataṁ* means the absence of anything made, and *asankhataṁ* means the absence of anything conditioned, which four Pāli terms are famous synonyms for nibbāna in the *Udāna* (Ud 8,3). Translators add an unwarranted spin when they render these negatives (indicated by the privative prefix *a*- in Pāli) as if there were something there, by translating them as “the unborn,”“the unoriginated,” “the uncreated,” “the unconditioned,” much as the White King takes “nobody” to be a person’s name.

Two Triggers for Stream Winning and Five Supporting Conditions

The Buddha said on many occasions that sammā samādhi, or jhāna, was the immediate cause for "seeing things as they truly are," *yathā bhūta ñāṇadassana* (AN V,24; V,168; VI,50; VII,61; VIII,81; X,3; XI,3). So why is it that not everyone who experiences a jhāna becomes a stream winner?

The answer is that in addition to jhāna one also needs an adequate understanding of the Buddha's teachings. In chapter 12, I gave the simile of the flashlight and the map. Imagine three men searching for treasure in the forest at night; the first man has a flashlight but no map. The second man has the map but no flashlight. And the third man has both a flashlight and the map. Only the third man will find the treasure. In this simile, the flashlight stands for the radiant mind empowered by jhāna, the map represents an accurate working knowledge of the Buddha's teachings, and the treasure refers to stream winning. Only when one has been instructed in Dhamma and has experience of jhāna will one discover nibbāna.

In the *Mahāvedalla Sutta,* Ven. Sāriputta stated that there are two "triggers" for the arising of right view, which is another way of saying for the attainment of stream winning. Those two triggers are "the words of another" *(parato ghosa)* coupled with "work of the mind that goes back to the source" *(yoniso manasikāra).* Ven. Sāriputta continued by saying that these two triggers are supported by five conditions: virtue *(sīla),* learning *(suta),* discussion *(sākacchā),* jhāna *(samatha),* and insight *(vipassanā)* (MN 43,13-14).

The "work of the mind that goes back to the source" refers to insight based on jhāna. In the simile of the thousand-petaled lotus within whose center lies the most precious of jewels, nibbāna, the task of the meditator is to gently open this lotus layer by layer until one reaches its heart. This describes what is meant by "work of the mind that goes back to the source." The function of jhāna is to bring one sufficiently close to that source. The function of insight is to realize the complete emptiness inside. Both jhāna and insight must be founded on virtue. For if one's virtue is not pure, then the nimitta will be dull or not arise at all, making jhānas unreachable. Thus, the second of Ven. Sāriputta's triggers for stream winning—work of the mind that goes back to the source—comprises the three supporting conditions of virtue, jhāna*,* and insight, all rolled together as yoniso manasikāra.

The "words of another" is the other necessary ingredient for stream winning. In the template of the five supporting conditions, this is represented by learning and discussion. Just reading the texts or listening to discourses from accomplished monks and nuns is not enough. One also needs to discuss what one has read and heard with a competent teacher to make sure that one has understood it correctly. In our universities we have a system of both lectures and tutorials or seminars that corresponds well with suta and sākacchā.

More profoundly, the "words of another"—spoken or written—must come from a noble one if they are to be effective. The noble ones are those who are stream winners, once-returners, nonreturners, or arahants. They have seen anicca, dukkha, and anattā to their very depths. They have had direct personal experience of nibbāna, so they know exactly what they're talking about. Hearing the Dhamma from a genuine noble one is so crucial, according to the suttas, that without it stream winning is impossible (AN X,61). A noble one and an ordinary person might be expounding exactly the same message, but the audience recognizes intuitively that there is a mountain of difference. It is where the teaching is coming from that makes the difference. When the discourse comes from a noble one, it is alive and thrilling. When it comes from an ordinary person, it is just interesting at best. Thus it is that even in Theravāda Buddhism there is something similar to the tradition of transmission, usually associated with Vajrayāna and Mahāyāna, although in Theravāda it is demystified and clearly explained as the inherent power in the teachings of a noble one. Moreover, such teachings and discussion, the words of another, are only half of what is required for stream winning to happen.

Thus the path to stream winning requires cultivating with diligence the five supporting conditions of virtue, learning, discussion, jhāna, and insight, making sure that learning and discussion, which combine as "the words of another," originate from a noble one. Let virtue and jhāna be one's foundations for insight, so that one fulfills "the work of the mind that goes back to the source." Then, when one brings close together these two, the words of another and the work of the mind that goes back to the source, it is like bringing gunpowder and a flame close together. When they touch, a huge explosion occurs. That is deep insight. When the smoke clears away, then one will discern that all illusions of a self are completely destroyed. And that is stream winning.

The Saddhānusārī and Dhammānusārī—Stream Winning without Jhāna?

A recurring topic of debate among our Sangha is, can one attain to stream winning without any experience of jhāna? As should be obvious from what has been written so far, I cannot see a possibility of penetrating to the full meaning of anattā, dukkha, and anicca without the radical data gained in a jhāna experience. Yet, there are some stories in the Tipiṭika (the "Three Baskets" that comprise the Pāli canon) that suggest it might be possible.

The most compelling passage that I have come across is the story of the thirty-one murderers sent by Devadatta to kill the Buddha without leaving a trail. The first murderer was to kill the Buddha, the next two were to kill the assassin, the next four had to kill those two, the following eight would slay the four, and the final sixteen would finish off the eight. That way, it would be difficult to trace who killed the Buddha. However, because of the powerful presence of the Buddha, none were able to fulfill their task. Instead, each group asked for forgiveness from the Buddha and were given a discourse on Dhamma. Hired killers are not known for their virtue, let alone any practice of jhāna, yet each one of these thirty-one would-be murderers attained to stream winning after hearing the Buddha's teaching (Vin 2,7,3,7-8).

Perhaps the anomaly can be explained through introducing here the two types of people on the path to stream winning: the *saddhānusārī,* or "mostly-by-faith follower," and the *dhammānusārī,* or "mostly-by-wisdom follower" (MN 70). The five spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, samādhi, and wisdom are what power the mind toward enlightenment. When samādhi and the resultant wisdom are weak, however, then faith and the resultant energy can compensate. One whose faith and energy are the main driving forces toward stream winning is called a *saddhānusārī,* and one for whom samādhi and wisdom are the main forces is called a *dhammānusārī*. Both, of course, need mindfulness. Perhaps, then, one with very strong faith in the Buddha's teachings, and with the enormous energy that flows easily from such faith, can attain to stream winning without any jhāna. As the old proverb says,"Faith can move mountains."

However, such a faith needs to be extraordinarily uncompromising to move the Mount Everest that is delusion and attain to stream winning without any jhāna. The level of faith required is like that of the young man in the following story adapted from the commentaries (Dhp-a III, 417-21). A young man begged an accomplished master to accept him as a disciple. The master refused, protesting that disciples are just a headache since they never do what they're told. The youth insisted that he had such strong faith in this master that he would follow his every instruction. So the master decided to test him. He ordered the youth to walk in a straight line due east, neither stopping nor changing direction, no matter what. Thus the student set off walking due east. When he came to a prickly bush, he just went straight through. When he came to some paddy fields, he trudged through the mud in a straight line, instead of zigzagging on top of the dikes. And when he came to a big lake, he simply continued walking, not deviating even one degree in his direction. Soon the water reached to his waist, then to his neck, and then up to his nose! He still continued walking. Just before the water covered his ears and stopped him from hearing, the master shouted for him to stop and come out of the water. After that, the young man became his disciple. It is easy to teach such a student who is willing to give up their life to follow their teacher's instructions. That is the level of faith required to be a *saddhānusārī* and attain to stream winning with no experience of jhāna. I don't see much possibility for this in these skeptical times.

Such an intense degree of faith should be invested only in a noble one. Faith without wisdom is a gamble. For this reason the path of wisdom based on jhāna, the way of the *dhammānusārī,* is the recommended path.

On a related issue, the suttas are explicit that it is impossible to attain to nonreturning, let alone to become an arahant, without any experience of jhāna, any more than one can reach the heartwood of a tree without first going through its bark and then its sapwood (MN 64; see also AN V,22; VI,68; VIII,81; IX,12).

Causality and Some Consequences of Stream Winning

The Buddha said, “One who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination.”[27] One of the inevitable consequences of stream winning is the full understanding of dependent origination. Before the breakthrough to Dhamma, the knower and the doer were both seen as one’s self, or part of that self. After stream winning, they are seen as mere natural processes, not ruled by a person, but ruled by the impersonal law of cause and effect as perfectly described in dependent origination.

Stream winners clearly comprehend the causes that generate the acts of knowing and doing. They also comprehend the consequences of knowing and doing. In particular, they realize how craving for sensual pleasure *(kāmataṇhā)* and craving to be *(bhavataṇhā)* propel this mental process of knowing, not only from moment to moment but also from life to life. Indeed, the stream winner understands that one of the main functions of dependent origination is to explain how rebirth happens without a self or a soul. It is, for the most part, these two types of craving that create the fuel *(upādāna)* for more existence *(bhava)* such that a rebirth *(jāti)* occurs. Or, if looked at in a parallel way, it is the illusion of a self and the denial of dukkha—in other words, delusion *(avijjā)*—that motivates kamma *(sankhāra)* to give the support for more consciousness *(viññāṇa)* to sprout in a new life cycle. Thus, the stream winner has no doubt that rebirth happens, just as the Buddha said. Moreover, the stream winner knows *why* rebirth happens.

Stream winners also have full penetration of the twelve factors of dependent origination in their ceasing mode, what I call *dependent cessation.* Having seen what keeps this impersonal process of body and mind going, they also see how it can cease without any remainder. They also see that from the moment of their attainment the process of cessation has begun. For them, the process of being has been fatally wounded, and the cessation of their existence is now irreversible.

When stream winners see anicca fully, they realize that body and mind can cease with no remainder. When they see anattā fully, they understand that there is nothing lost in such a final cessation, since there was no persisting thing there to begin with, only a process. And when they see dukkha fully, it invariably gives rise to an urgency to bring the process to an end. This is just like having an apple and finding that it is rotten through and through, with no part worth saving. An urgency would then arise to throw the apple away. After stream winning, it is this understanding of such thoroughgoing dukkha that takes the lead, driving the body-and-mind process to cessation.

Revulsion *(nibbidā)* to one's predicament sets in. Just as the Buddha often taught, the inevitable consequence of seeing things as they truly are, that is, stream winning, is the arising of revulsion (SN 12,23). When one finally sees the apple as rotten, revulsion causes one to discard it.

It is to be emphasized that there is nothing personal in such revulsion, for all views of a self have been eliminated. Nibbidā is an impersonal phenomenon that arises naturally after stream winning, whether one wants it or not (cf. AN XI,2). It is nature*,* Dhamma, that's all. Moreover, such a sense of revulsion is one of the signs of stream winning. One who has seen the Dhamma fully, in particular dukkha, will experience the urge to find release, just like the prisoner who was born and raised in jail would want to get out soon after he realizes his awful predicament. It is delusion *(avijjā)* and craving *(taṇhā)* that tie one to the wheel of saṃsāra, and it is revulsion *(nibbidā)* that flings one off. Nibbidā is saṃsāra's ejection seat. Before stream winning, the conditioned process of doing was under the influence of delusion, and so was mostly engaged in acquiring and socializing. After stream winning, the process of doing comes increasingly under the guidance of Dhamma, especially the knowledge of dukkha, and therefore inclines more and more to renunciation and solitude.

Fading Away

Further along the causal sequence of cessation—along the “law of nibbāna,” one might say—nibbidā generates fading away *(virāga),* especially the fading away of sensory desire and ill will. Once one has seen that the world of the five senses is permeated so thoroughly by dukkha, then there is nothing there for one anymore. As the mind rejects that world, not because one wills it but because it is a part of an inevitable process, then that world literally fades away from the mind. Later the world of the mind will also fade away, since that is permeated with dukkha too. Depending on such factors as the strength of one’s experience of stream winning—that is, how deeply one’s understanding of dukkha, anattā, and anicca has penetrated one’s habitual tendencies—so long will it take for the process of cessation to culminate in the experience of *vimutti,* “full deliverance.” And since this process is governed by natural laws, its duration has a limit.

Seven Lifetimes at Most

The law of nibbāna is such that, at the very most, the process of cessation will crescendo to a finale at the end of six more lifetimes.[28] Understanding that the doer is not a self, but simply part of a causal process, will make it clear that stream winners cannot choose, for instance, three more lives or the whole six. The matter is not under their control anymore. It is like getting on the bus to nibbāna. Once on this bus, one can neither get off nor control the driver. The nibbāna bus goes according to its own schedule, and only to the terminus! So it should be apparent that having reached the stage of stream winning, one is incapable of resolving to postpone one's impending enlightenment out of compassion for other beings. It is now too late for bodhisattva vows. The law of nibbāna, this natural process of cessation, has passed the point of no return. It is unstoppable now. It will be nibbāna in seven lifetimes at most. Good-bye!

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Onward to Full Enlightenment

THERE ARE FOUR LEVELS of enlightenment: the stream winner *(sotāpanna),* the once-returner *(sakadāgāmī),* the nonreturner *(anāgāmī),* and the fully enlightened one *(arahant)*. The stream winner is one who has seen the Dhamma, attained correct view *(diṭṭhipatta),* and must win full enlightenment within seven lifetimes. The once-returner has progressed from stream winning to see much of sensory desire and ill will fade away, so much so that they will return to a human existence only once more, at most. According to the commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, all once-returners arise in the Tusiṭa heaven after this life and are then reborn in the human realm for their last life.[29] Nonreturners have advanced even further to completely eliminate all desire within the world of the five senses and ill will. Should they not win full enlightenment at the time of their death, then they will arise in the pure abodes *(suddhāvāsa)* to attain full enlightenment there. They are never again reborn in this human world. Finally, arahants, fully enlightened ones, have completed the task and have nothing further to achieve. This is their final existence.

The Seven Shipwrecked Sailors

These four stages of enlightenment are further explained in the Buddha's simile of the seven shipwrecked sailors in the *Udakūpama Sutta* (AN VII,*15*). Even though this sutta makes no direct mention of sailors or a shipwreck, this detail (added by me) is a reasonable assumption to account for the seven men of the sutta being in the water a long way from land.

Seven sailors found themselves in the sea after a shipwreck. The first sailor went straight down and drowned. The second man floated for a while, and then sank to his death. The third floated on the surface and remained with his head above water. The fourth, while remaining with his head above water, looked around and saw the safety of land in the not too far distance. The fifth, also having floated and spotted land, was well on his way swimming to the shore. The sixth sailor, having kept above water and seen land as well, had swum almost there and was now standing in the surf, wading to shore. The seventh shipwrecked sailor, having floated, seen land, swum, and waded to shore, was now sitting happily on dry land, relaxed and safe.

The Buddha explained the meaning of the simile as follows:

The first shipwrecked sailor, who went straight down and drowned, represents someone who has done lots of bad kamma. They go straight down to the lower realms after death.

The second shipwrecked sailor, who floated for a while and then went down to his death, represents someone who had the seven spiritual strengths, but then lost them. The seven spiritual strengths *(satta balāni)* are moral shame *(hiri),* fear of the kammic consequences of wrongdoing *(ottappa),* faith, energy, mindfulness, samādhi, and wisdom (these last five being the standard five spiritual faculties or strengths). Having carelessly let them disappear, through lack of practice, they also go down to the lower realms after death.

The third sailor, who remains afloat, represents someone who maintains these seven spiritual strengths. They keep their head above water, so to speak, in spite of the ups and downs of life.

The fourth sailor, who looks around while afloat and sees the safety of land, represents the stream winner, one who has seen the safety of nibbāna.

The fifth sailor, who is swimming to the shore, represents the once-returner, one who has partially eradicated sensory desire and ill will.

The sixth sailor, who is so close to the land that he can stand and wade the rest of the way, represents the nonreturner, one who has eliminated all desire and ill will within the world of the five senses. The majority of their work is done, and they stand very close to nibbāna.

The seventh former shipwrecked sailor, who has reached the safety and comfort of dry land, is the fully enlightened one, the arahant.

This illuminating simile of the Buddha contains much valuable information about these four stages of enlightenment. First, it emphasizes again the importance of the five spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, samādhi, and wisdom for attaining stream winning, while adding two vital ingredients, moral shame and fear of wrongdoing. These two qualities, in Pāli *hiri* and *ottappa,* are called by the Buddha "guardians of the world," because they protect virtuous conduct (AN II,1,9). Second, the simile shows the difference between the stream winner and the arahant: the stream winner has only *seen* nibbāna, whereas the arahant has *reached* nibbāna. In another simile from the suttas, stream winners are like thirsty persons who can see water in a deep well but have neither bucket nor rope to reach it, whereas arahants have buckets and ropes, draw up water, and quench their thirst (SN 12,68). Third, the simile illustrates what the stream winner needs to do next to proceed to full enlightenment, and how their practice progresses through once-returning to nonreturning and then to full enlightenment. Now I will explain what that practice is.

The Vipallāsa and Purifying One's Thought

The practice leading from stream winning to nonreturning is, of course, the noble eightfold path. At this stage, the eightfold path truly deserves the designation "noble," since it is now being pursued by a noble one. The first factor of this path, right view, has now come to perfection. Once this foundation stone of the noble eightfold path has been set in place by the stream winner, only then can the rest of the path be brought to perfection (AN X,121). From then on, the main focus of work for the stream winner is on perfecting the second factor of the path, *sammā sankappa,* or right thought.

It is thoughts of sensory desire *(kāma-sankappa),* ill will *(vyāpādasankappa),* and cruelty *(vihiṃsa-sankappa)* that must now be completely abandoned to reach nonreturning. Effort, mindfulness, and samādhi must now combine to purify thought. It is only after stream winning that one can begin to root out, once and for all, these insidious mental defilements *(kilesa)* that have been distorting the thought process over countless lifetimes. For this reason, only after stream winning is the student called by the Buddha a *sekha,* "learner"; only then does the training start in earnest.

To explain more deeply what needs to be done and why, I need to introduce the Buddha's teaching of *vipallāsa,* "the distorting of the cognitive process" (AN IV,49). Here the cognitive process is regarded as threefold: consisting of view, perception, and thought. The Buddha observed how views fashion perceptions, perceptions fashion thoughts, and thoughts fashion views. Thus, incorrect view will distort perception to suit itself, resulting in mistaken perceptions. Perceptions are the building blocks of thoughts (MN 18,16). So, from mistaken perceptions one constructs erroneous thoughts. These thoughts are then employed to justify one's views. Thus, these erroneous thoughts reinforce our original wrong view. So continues the seemingly unending, self-sustaining, vicious circle of wrong view leading to mistaken perception leading to erroneous thought leading to wrong view leading to mistaken perception. …The unfortunate aspect of this distortion of the cognitive process is that most people can't see it happening. They presume that raw perception, the primary evidence supplied by the senses, is always accurate. It explains beautifully why everyone thinks they are right!

A distressing, modern-day example of this is the common attitude of ex-partners during their divorce. One starts out with the view that one's ex is a pig. Driven by this wrong view, one will perceive only their piglike behavior. Anything about them that isn't porcine will be blocked out by denial, or be interpreted to appear very piggish. All that is allowed to manifest as perception is their pig nature. So, based on the evidence of one's own perception, which one takes as authentic data drawn from raw experience, one will reasonably keep thinking of one's ex as a swine. Thus one's rational thinking process confirms what one knew all along. See, they are a pig! In this way, wrong view is justified, and the vicious circle of cognitive distortion continues unrecognized.

A more subtle example comes from out-of-body experiences, the sort where one floats out of one's body, travels down a tunnel to a light, through that light to meet a divine presence, who then announces that it's not one's time yet, and one returns to tell the tale. Of interest here is the identity of this divine presence. From what I have read and heard, devout Christians report meeting Jesus, while some Catholics claim it was the Virgin Mary, whereas Chinese Buddhists insist they met the goddess of mercy, Kuan Yin, while some Hindus were received by Lord Krishna…and the atheist is convinced that the presence he met was the recently deceased Uncle George!

What is happening? Do all these divine beings have a peek to see who's coming before deciding whose turn it is? "Here comes a Buddhist from Hong Kong. This one is for you, Kuan Yin." Please excuse my cheekiness, for I don't mean to offend anyone's beliefs. I only mean to demonstrate the implausibility of such a scenario. What is really happening is that each person's experience (which is in fact but a reflection of the radiance of their own mind) is distorted by their religious views, or lack of them, which bend perception to fit their belief system. Unaware of this process of distorting, they take their perceptions at face value. The Christian is overjoyed to have met Jesus, the Catholic is so inspired to have witnessed the Blessed Virgin…and even the atheist is delighted to have caught up with dear old Uncle George. It is no wonder that, as a result, they each firmly believe that theirs is the only truth.

The Fourfold Delusion

The Buddha was specifically concerned about the cognitive distortion that sustains the delusions of a self, pleasure, permanence, and beauty (AN IV,49). For instance, when one holds the view that there is indeed a self "in here," then that wrong view will distort perception to make it appear as if there *is* a self. Then one will think in terms of me, mine, and a self, thereby reinforcing that wrong view. Should that view of a self be challenged, one will resort to reasoning—that is, thought—and back it up with what one takes to be raw experience: one's perceptions. To such a one, it is blatantly obvious from reason and experience that there is indeed a self, and even the argument from a buddha will not sway them. It needs the revolutionary new perceptions derived from jhāna to overthrow their delusion.

Let's take another example. Most people hold the view that sex is pleasurable. This view is held so widely that, were I to suggest this is wrong view, many of my readers will regard me not just as a weird monk but as downright crazy—or "a few pieces of cloth short of a full set of robes," as we monks say. Because this view is held so strongly, sex actually does appear pleasurable, for pleasurable sexual experiences are the only data allowed to enter perception. Based on such experiences, one thinks about sex—thinks of it as pleasurable and thinks about it often! That is why the view that sex is pleasurable is taken as fact. The Buddha said that this is wrong view (MN 22,3). Mere words, though, will never break such a deeply rooted, self-sustaining vicious circle of delusion. Again, it is the force of jhāna that will explode the myth of sex as pleasure.

In summary, the Buddha explained that delusion *(avijjā)* is fourfold: taking what is not a self to be a self, what is transient to be permanent, what is suffering to be pleasure, and what is disgusting to be beautiful. Each of these four misapprehensions manifest at all three levels of cognition, view, perceptions, and thought. That is the problem.

This fourfold delusion is broken at the stage of view. Through using jhāna to suppress the five hindrances and provide undistorted perceptions, one is able to see things as they truly are. Right view becomes established at stream winning. A stream winner will never again hold the four wrong views: of a self in what is not self, of permanence in what is transient, of pleasure in what is suffering, and of beauty in what is disgusting. But this does not mean that a stream winner is exempt from lustful perceptions or angry thoughts. Once view has been purified, perception and thought do not immediately fall into line. For the sekha, or learner, sometimes perceptions and thoughts are fashioned by the right view attained at stream winning, and sometimes they are fashioned by former distorted views, what we call "habitual tendencies." It takes a while, sometimes seven lifetimes, to overcome old habits. Nonetheless, when sekhas do have thoughts of, say, lust, they regard it as a temporary lapse of mindfulness—that is, they understand that their mind has briefly disconnected from right view and fallen back into long-ingrained habits.

The purification of perceptions and thoughts from sensory desire and ill will, then, is the route from stream winning to nonreturning. This is done by keeping in mind the Dhamma that was realized at stream winning, until it is constantly present, what is called "unbroken mindfulness." Such continuous mindfulness is made possible only through jhāna and right effort, supported by virtue. This is what was meant by "swimming to the shore" in the simile of the seven shipwrecked sailors. Effort, mindfulness, and jhāna gradually overcome all thoughts of sensory desire, ill will, and cruelty *(micchā sankappa),* to the point where they can never arise again. The second factor of the noble eightfold path, right thought, is completed. One is a nonreturner. Now all that is left to do is to wade the short distance to land.

The Nonreturner

Once the first two factors of the noble eightfold path are perfected, the next three factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood must also come to perfection. This is because all actions of body and speech originate in thought. So, when thought has been purified of sensory desire and ill will, speech and action are also purified of the same two defilements. Furthermore, the Buddha stated that the nonreturner is fully accomplished in virtue, fully accomplished in samādhi, but only moderately accomplished in wisdom (AN III,85).[30] Thus the final three factors of the noble eightfold path, which are together represented as samādhi (as at MN 44,11), have also been perfected. The nonreturner, then, has purified the path. All the factors are in place. All that is left is the goal, realizing nibbāna.

So what does a nonreturner look like? In the suttas, the most detailed descriptions of nonreturners concern laypersons. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN VIII,21), Ugga of Vesāli had four young wives before he attained to nonreturning! Afterward, he informed all his wives that he could not remain as their husband anymore, and he asked them to choose either to remain in the house as his “sisters,” to return to their former families, or to take another husband, as each saw fit. Nonreturners, by nature, are celibate. The nonreturner’s inherent humility also led Ugga to treat all members of the Sangha—even those monks less attained than he was—with utmost respect.[31] In the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Citta the householder, another nonreturner, could attain the four jhānas to whatever extent he wished.[32] In the Majjhima Nikāya, Ghatīkāra the potter was also a lay nonreturner (MN 81). He was prevented from becoming a monk only because of his duty to look after his blind and aged parents. He kept the five precepts, was celibate, ate only in the morning, and would have nothing to do with money. Thus he kept much the same precepts as a *sāmaṇera,* or novice monk. Having made some pots, he would announce, “Let anyone who likes leave some food, and let them take away whatever they like,” and that was how he provided for himself and his parents.[33] In the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN VII,50), Nandamātā was a lay female nonreturner. When the king’s soldiers killed her only son in front of her, she bore no ill will toward her child’s killers. She also could attain any of the four jhānas at will. Thus, even laypersons who were nonreturners behaved as though they were not of this world.

To return to the system of the vipallāsa explained above, for the nonreturner, delusion *(avijjā)* still operates but only at the levels of perception and thought. View remains forever freed from delusion. Therefore the nonreturner sometimes perceives and thinks with desire, but no longer for the world of the five senses; the nonreturner retains desire for the world of jhāna and the world of the immaterial attainments. Also, the nonreturner sometimes perceives and thinks in terms of “I am” (e.g., SN 22,89). Such perceptions and thoughts regenerate the doer, causing discontent and consequent restlessness. Thus the nonreturner is said to be tied by the five higher fetters: delusion *(avijjā),* desire for jhānas *(rūparāga),* desire for immaterial attainments *(arūpa-rāga),* conceiving “I am” *(māna),* and restlessness *(uddhacca).*

In practice, nonreturners have to continue along the path, using the combination of right effort, mindfulness, and jhāna to keep in mind those insights first seen at stream winning. In particular, they keep in mind that dukkha extends to jhānas, and permeates the immaterial attainments also, to the point where revulsion *(nibbidā)* turns the mind away from these existences too. They also keep in mind the Dhamma of anattā, no-self, until that becomes constantly established at the levels of perception and thought. When this has been completed, then the mind has been fully purified. One is an arahant. As the well-known summary of Buddhism states:

> Not to do any evil,
> To cultivate good
> *To purify the mind,*
> This is the teaching of the buddhas.
>
> *(Dhp 183)*

Sometimes, noble ones go from stream winning straight to full enlightenment, bypassing the stages of the once-returner and nonreturner. Using the simile of the seven shipwrecked sailors, it is as if they swam straight to the land without ever standing in the surf. Perhaps, having swum so close, they are picked up by a strong wave and gently deposited on the beach.

An example of this is the full enlightenment of the Buddha's chief attendant, Ven. Ānanda. After the final passing away of the Buddha, a meeting of senior monks was arranged to collect the Buddha's teachings and preserve them. It later became known as the First Council (Vin 2,11). Five hundred monks were invited, of whom 499 were arahants. The exception was Ven. Ānanda. So the evening before the meeting, Ven. Ānanda resolved to meditate earnestly throughout the night, trying his best to gain full enlightenment. At dawn he could see no progress. So he gave up. He let go. And a few moments later, he became the five-hundredth arahant!

This remarkable event can be explained using the simile of the donkey and the carrot. Many years ago in southern Europe, villagers would use donkey carts for transportation. Donkeys, being notoriously stubborn, had to be tricked into pulling the heavy carts. The owner would attach a long stick to the cart, so that it extended a couple of feet in front of the donkey's head. A string was tied to the front end of the stick, and a big juicy carrot tied to the end of the string. Motivated by desire to eat the carrot dangling on the end of the string just in front, the donkey would move forward and thereby pull the cart. The carrot would also move forward, at the same speed. Thus the owner would get his donkey to pull the cart without wasting too many carrots.

Buddhist donkeys, however, know how to get that carrot! They run like hell after that carrot, putting maximum effort *(viriya)* and concentration *(samādhi)* into moving that cart as fast as they can. Of course, the carrot moves just as fast, always remaining a couple feet in front of the donkey's mouth. At this point, the Buddhist donkey lets go of desire. They suddenly stop! Because of momentum, the carrot swings even further from the donkey, arcing up further than it has ever been before. But this donkey has faith *(saddhā)* and wisdom *(paññā)* and so waits patiently with mindfulness *(sati),* since effort and concentration have done their work. Patiently observing, the donkey sees the carrot swing away to the extreme, and then sees it begin to swing back again."Rising and falling," notes the donkey. Soon the carrot has fallen back to its usual position but, oddly, it is now traveling toward the donkey and at some speed. Practicing patience, the donkey does nothing. It is the carrot that does all the work as it comes closer and closer. At the right moment, the donkey simply opens its mouth and the big juicy carrot comes in *all by itself.* Crunch! Munch!

Mmm! That tastes sweet! This is how donkeys who know the Dhamma catch the carrot.

In Ven. Ānanda's story, he had pursued the carrot of nibbāna so energetically throughout the night. But however hard he chased that carrot, full enlightenment was always just out of reach. When he gave up and stopped to take a short nap, nibbāna swung even further away for a few moments. And then nibbāna, like the carrot, came to Ven. Ānanda! According to the well-known account, before Ven. Ānanda's head had touched the pillow, his mind had swallowed sweet nibbāna.

The Arahant, or Fully Enlightened One

Full enlightenment means that one will never again hold the view that there is a self, nor perceive in terms of a self, nor think that anything is me, mine, or a self. Since there is no longer any idea of “me” or “mine,” an arahant does not store up possessions as other people do. For instance, when my teacher Ajahn Chah was at the height of his fame and still very active, he asked me to go up to his room for something. It was the first time that I had seen his living quarters, and I shall never forget the experience. Even though prime ministers, powerful generals, and wealthy businesspersons presented all sorts of gifts to Ajahn Chah, he kept nothing for himself. His room was empty but for a rolled-up grass mat, his alms bowl, and a couple of robes. It would have taken him less than a minute to pack up all his possessions and go. The room appeared as if there was no one living in there, which well reflects the mind of an arahant.

Nine Things an Arahant Cannot Do

There are nine things that an arahant, by nature, cannot do: store up possessions, intentionally kill any form of life, steal, perform sexual intercourse, tell a deliberate lie, and act improperly out of desire, out of ill will, out of delusion, or out of fear (AN IX,7).[34] For instance, since sensory desire has been totally transcended, there is no spark left to ignite the passion for sex. All arahants are "potently impotent."

Furthermore, the arahant has eradicated, once and for all, the three kinds of conceit *(māna):* "I am better," "I am worse," and "I am equal." In Buddhism, even cringing self-disparagement of the "I am hopeless" type is seen as an inverted form of conceit. Arahants, inherently, cannot perceive in terms of "I am" anymore (SN 22,89). They see the body and mind as an impersonal process. To them, it makes as little sense to compare one process with another as it does to compare the value of a piece of wood to that of a mango.

On the subject of the three forms of conceit, it is at full enlightenment that all personal comparisons cease. Old and troublesome controversies, such as whether an arahant is superior to a bodhisattva or vice versa, all disappear. An arahant lives a truth, that of no-self, beyond such measuring. Elitism has no part in full enlightenment. Thus one can expect genuine humility from an arahant, as the following story demonstrates.

Ven. Sāriputta was a famous arahant, acknowledged by all as exceptionally wise. One morning he went on his alms round improperly dressed. A very young upstart of a novice noticed the fault and publicly admonished the great monk. Instead of responding something like "Who do you think you are, you little squirt, to tell me!" Ven. Sāriputta quietly checked to see if he was indeed untidily dressed. On seeing that it was true, Ven. Sāriputta went behind a bush, adjusted his robes, and then came back to thank the little novice, addressing him with great respect as "my teacher." That is graceful humility, a sign of an arahant (Th-a 2,116).

The Arahant and the Outlaws

The arahant, being beyond all perceptions of self, feels no need to be popular. Their minds are freed from the need to impress. Nor will they ever experience fear, since they have nothing left to lose. The following verses from the *Theragāthā* (verses 705-25) describe such a fearless one, the arahant Adhimutta Thera, and his dialogue with robbers:

705 *The Robbers:*
"Those whom we killed for sacrifice,
Or for their wealth against their will,
All trembled, babbling with fear.

706 "But you don't seem to be afraid,
With your complexion brightening;
Serene and calm, you don't lament
When faced with greatest danger, death."

707 *Adhimutta:*
"There is no suffering inside the mind
When longing has been left behind;
And truly, Chief, all fears are overcome
In one who has forever cut his bonds.

708 "When that which leads one to future birth
Has been destroyed, and when phenomena
Are seen with wisdom as they really are,
There is no fear at death; a burden is put down.

709 "The holy life has been well lived by me;
The path has been developed to the end.
I have no fear of death, just as
I would not fear destruction of disease.

710 "The holy life has been well lived by me;
The path has been developed to the end.
Existences are seen as pointless and banal;
I have spat out the poison that I used to drink.

711 "For one who has reached the further shore,
For whom there's no more 'taking up,' whose task is done,
In whom the outflows of the mind have ceased,
There is delight at the life's concluding end,
As one delights at freedom from the chopping block.

712 “I have attained the highest truth, supreme;
The world has nothing left to offer me.
At death there is no grief, it brings relief,
Like being rescued from a burning house.

713 “The mighty sage has made it clear to us:
‘Whatever here has come to be,
Wherever else existence is obtained,
All that is not created by a ruling god.’

714 “Whoever knows this as the Buddha taught,
Does not take up existence, as one won’t
‘Take up’ a red-hot glowing iron ball.

715 “For me there is no ‘I have been,’
Nor does the thought occur that ‘I will be.’
When these formations terminate and cease,
Regarding them, what is there to lament?

716 “Just pure arising of phenomena,
The pure persistence of formations through a cause,
Seen as it truly is, there is no fear, O Chief.

717 “When one with wisdom looks upon this world
As one would look upon a heap of grass and sticks,
One can’t find any ownership;
There won’t be grief, because there is no ‘mine.’

718 “I’m weary of this corpse, and I’m fed up;
Existence lost its spell, and there will be
No other corpse when this one here breaks up.

719 “Do as you please, do what you have to do.
But on account of this cadaver here,
No hatred or affection will ensue.”

720 At these hair-raising and extraordinary words,
The robbers, throwing down their swords, said this:

721 “Dear Sir, what have you done, and who has been
your instructor,

Whose teaching leads one to such freedom from all sorrow?"

722 *Adhimutta:*
"All-knowing and all-seeing, the Conqueror and Victor,
Of infinite compassion has been my instructor;
He is the teacher of the world and its physician.

722 "He taught this matchless Dhamma leading to extinction,
Which when pursued will lead to freedom from all sorrow."

723 Now having heard these words, well spoken by the sage,
With swords put down, and with their weapons laid aside,
Some robbers there and then desisted from their trade,
While others left the world, to live the holy life.

725 Gone forth in the religion of the Blessed One,
Developing the factors of enlightenment,
The "powers," wisdom, and the higher mind,
With joyful hearts, and with their faculties matured,
They came to touch the unconditioned state; nibbāna.

(Translated by Ajahn Cattamalo)

What Motivates Arahants?

One explains the state of full enlightenment not just by listing the things that arahants are incapable of doing, but also by depicting the kind of behavior that they do perform. In essence, their behavior consists of acts of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. It is these four “sublime abidings,” or *brahmavihāras,* that motivate every action of an arahant, whether it be teaching or serving, eating or resting, or whatever else they are called upon to do.

I count it as my most fortunate blessing to have lived as a monk in Thailand from 1974 to 1983 and met such arahants. One that I will always remember was reputed to possess many psychic powers. Psychic powers often come with full enlightenment, but not always (SN 12,70). In particular, this great monk was said to read minds. Suspecting this might be true, I was hesitant—actually I was terrified—of meeting such an arahant. My young monk’s mind was no more fit to be read by a great monk than a raunchy novel was, and certainly not in public! But when I entered the presence of such a being, or I should say a “nonbeing,” all my fears evaporated in a instant. I felt so calm, so safe and accepted, in spite of all my faults. It is because arahants don’t look down on anyone (the three conceits have been eliminated) that one feels so at ease with them. All that they emanate is their compassion and wisdom. Being with a genuine arahant is the most comforting and encouraging of encounters.

Sometime later, a fellow monk gave the following unusual but precise metaphor for an arahant. He told me that it is as if people have many sharp, invisible, spiritual spikes protruding from their bodies. Some people’s spiritual spikes are so extensive and razor sharp that, when they enter a room, everyone in that room feels very uncomfortable. One often gets wounded in their presence. Most people’s spiritual spikes are not so long or sharp. One can get close to them but, if one comes too close… ouch! one gets scratched. Some exceptional people have very few spikes, and those they do have are short and blunt. They seem so full of love that one wants to get close to them. But even with these people, if one comes really close, then too one can get scratched. They also have personal territory to protect. Then lastly, there is a rare and special class of being that has no spiritual spikes at all. They are the arahants. “They are just so soft and cuddly!” someone once said to me, impertinently though quite understandably. An arahant is like the perfect spiritual grandfather, all wise and gentle, with absolutely no trace of anger, one who keeps your well-being as their only concern. When one comes into the presence of such an arahant, one never wants to leave.

The End of All Suffering

That is what an arahant is like, should one be fortunate enough to meet one. They appear to be the happiest people in the world (MN 89,12). But what is the inner experience of an arahant? Are they free from all suffering?

The answer, which comes as a surprise for some, is no! Arahants are not yet free from all dukkha. In order to explain the difference between an arahant and all others, the Buddha taught the simile of the two darts (SN 36,6). Should one be struck by a dart, or an arrow, they would experience much suffering. Should they be struck immediately afterward by a second dart, then they would experience twice as much suffering or more. In this simile, the two darts are bodily and mental feeling *(vedanā).*

When most people experience a painful bodily feeling, it is followed immediately by a painful mental feeling. It is like being struck by two darts in quick succession. But for arahants (and nonreturners),[35] when they experience a painful bodily feeling, it is not followed by a painful mental response. It is like being struck by only one dart. The fully enlightened ones have removed the dart of mental suffering, but they still must experience the dart of bodily suffering. Even the Buddha had to experience bodily pain (DN 16,4,20). Indeed, during the last few months of the Buddha's life, he said that only when he entered "the signless samādhi" *(animitta ceto-samādhi)* was he free from bodily discomfort (DN 16,2,25).

Of course, the dart of bodily suffering is very small compared to the totality of mental suffering that has been removed. That is why arahants are the happiest beings alive. The suffering that remains, though, is important. It both defines the inner experience of the arahant and provides the main cause for their parinibbāna, or complete extinction. For example, when the arahant Vajirā was challenged to say who she was, she explained how the body-and-mind process named "Vajirā" looked from inside the mind of an enlightened one:

> It is only suffering that comes to be,
> Suffering that stands and falls away.
> Nothing but suffering comes to be,
> Nothing but suffering ceases.[36]

Such an insider's view of an arahant's mind is confirmed by the Buddha in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* (SN 12,15), where he states,"What arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing."[37] As explained earlier, it is because dukkha permeates every level of existence, even that of an arahant, that revulsion *(nibbidā)* arises and then causes the body-and-mind process of the arahant to come to a complete end.

So full enlightenment is not the end of all suffering! Instead, it is called *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna,* or "nibbāna with existence remaining." The arahant is at the very last stage of being, the level where they know two things. First, they know the causes of rebirth, mostly craving for sensual pleasure *(kāmataṇhā)* and craving to be *(bhavataṇhā).* Second, they know that these causes have all been destroyed. Why crave "to be" when one has realized that even being an arahant is dukkha? Thus the arahant is said to have destroyed the seeds (Sn 235), the "spiritual genes," that reproduce dukkha from life to life, *and they know it has been totally destroyed*. That is the unique knowledge of the arahant. For them, it is only a matter of a short time until they reach *an-upādisesa nibbāna,* or "nibbāna with no existence remaining," otherwise known as parinibbāna, or complete extinction. In the timeless words from the *gāthā* of the arahant Sankicca Thera:

> I do not long for death, for life I have no yearning;
> Like a workman, waiting for his wages, I await my time. (Thag 606)

Parinibbāna

That moment when arahants receive their “wages,” the final end of all suffering, is parinibbāna. It is the end of existence, *bhavanirodha* (SN 12,68). From the time when full enlightenment occurs until their parinibbāna, the arahant is the greatest benefit to the world (*Ratana Sutta,* Sn 233). They teach by example, through direct experience of nibbāna, and are living embodiments of the Dhamma. The Buddha’s own forty-five years from full enlightenment to parinibbāna still remain the most powerful period of this age. Those years still echo like thunder in countries far distant from the fertile Ganges plain, and their brilliance even illuminates our time, some twenty-six centuries remote, like a massive supernova showering its light across the millennia. It was long ago that the Buddha set in motion the wheel of the Dhamma. Through the succeeding centuries it has been the arahants who have kept that wheel turning. Like the Buddha, the first arahant of this age, all arahants merely show the way. It is up to their listeners to walk the journey. That way continues to be shown, and it remains well traveled even today. There being nothing more they can do to help all sentient beings, all buddhas and all arahants attain parinibbāna. What was only “dukkha arising and dukkha passing away” now ceases forever.

So what follows after parinibbāna? After the moment of complete extinction, all knowing *(viññāṇa, citta, and mano)* and all that can be known *(nāma-rūpa)* cease, and with them all descriptions and words cease as well. There is nothing more to say. It doesn’t even make any sense to say there is nothing (e.g., AN IV, 174), lest someone misunderstands “nothing” to be something’s name.

How to Tell If Someone Is Enlightened

An often-asked question is, how can one verify that someone is enlightened? The answer is that one cannot know for sure. Only the buddhas have that ability (AN VI,44),[38] for it is the sixth of the ten powers of a buddha (AN X,21).[39] In the time of the Buddha, only he would confirm another's attainments. Even great arahants like Ven. Sāriputta had to ask the Buddha on this matter (SN 35,87).[40]

However, even though one is unable to know for sure that someone *is* enlightened, it is possible to know for sure that certain types of people are *not* enlightened. The four stages of enlightenment are each defined by clear signs, so, if any of the essential signs are missing, then one can be certain that they have not reached that level.

For stream winning, the essential signs begin with the “four characteristic qualities of a stream winner.” They are as follows: unshakable faith in the enlightenment of the Buddha; unshakable faith in the excellence of the Buddha’s teaching, the Dhamma; unshakable faith in the worthiness of noble ones in the monastic Sangha; and a high level of moral conduct that is “dear to the noble ones” (DN 16,2,9; SN 55,1). The *Kosambiya Sutta* (MN 48) gives more detail on what that level of conduct is: Should they break a precept then, by nature, they will always reveal it to their teacher, or to a fellow student, and restrain such misbehavior in future.[41] Furthermore, the stream winner has eradicated *sakkāya diṭṭhi,* “personality view,” meaning that they never regard *any* of the five *khandhas* (body, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness) as a self, as a possession of a self, as containing a self, or as being contained in a self (MN 44,7; SN 22,1). Since it is such personality view that creates all sixty-two of the wrong views listed in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (SN 41,3), the stream winner can hold none of those views (DN 1). This is why the stream winner is called “one complete in right view” *(diṭṭhi-sampanna)* (AN VI,89-95). Therefore all stream winners necessarily hold the view that rebirth exists (MN 60,11) and kamma exists (MN 60,19). Lastly, stream winning is an event (AN III,12), so the stream winner should be able to point out the time and the place that it occurred.

So, for example, if someone has no respect for the Sangha, or claims not to believe in rebirth, or holds the view that the mind *(citta)* or mentality *(mano)* or consciousness *(viññāṇa)* is everlasting (wrong view number eight in the *Brahmajāla Sutta,* DN 1,2,13), then one can know for sure that this person is not a stream winner.

This standard is based on clear statements in the suttas. If someone objects to this standard, saying that they do not respect what the suttas say about stream winning, then that is another sure sign that they are not a stream winner; for all noble ones respect the Buddha’s teaching and receive inspiration therefrom (MN 48,13-14).[42]

For once-returners, all the signs of stream winning must be present, plus a lessening of sensory desire and ill will. This stage is so hard to define precisely that I have said little about it in this chapter. For instance, in the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN VI,44) there is a story of two brothers, Purāna and Isidatta, who were both declared as once-returners by the Buddha, although the former was celibate and the latter was sexually active.[43] It was a case in point, showing that only a buddha has the ability to know for certain the attainments of another.

For nonreturners the signs are much clearer. All the qualities of the stream winner must be present, plus a complete absence of sensory desire and ill will. Thus a nonreturner is incapable of even fantasizing about sex (inferring from AN VI,63),[44] let alone performing any sexual act. So someone who is sexually active is certainly not a nonreturner, and the same goes for someone who is obviously angry.

For the arahant, the signs are clearer still. All the qualities of the stream winner and the nonreturner must be present, plus qualities such as the nine things that an arahant is incapable of doing, such as storing up possessions (AN IX,7).[45] The arahant also has a natural humility due to the absence of the three "I am" conceits (SN 22,89). Another unique quality of the arahant is their fearlessness in the face of death (such as in the story of Adhimutta Thera given earlier in this chapter). So if you see someone who has many possessions, is proud, or fears death, then you know that person is not fully enlightened.

That is how one can know that someone is *not* at this or that stage of enlightenment. However, just because certain wrong views or behaviors are not apparent does not mean that they are eradicated. Sometimes they are suppressed by jhāna, sometimes by will. For example, if one could read another's nonenlightened mind just after it emerges from jhāna, then it would appear so clear of defilements as to be indistinguishable from the normal mind of an arahant. That is one of the reasons why only a buddha can know for certain the attainment of another. Everyone else can only know for sure that certain types have yet to reach such and such an attainment.

The Two Temple Boys

A helpful story on this point concerns an incident that occurred two decades ago to one of the most highly regarded meditation teachers of our time. Two temple boys with little education asked this famous teacher for some instruction in meditation. Every few days the young boys would report their progress, which was outstanding. In a very short time, these two youths from a poor village had outstripped all the monks. Those who were there at that time later told me that the atmosphere in that monastery was electric. Two boys of exceptional spiritual ability had come to their forest monastery, as if by chance, and were now well on the way to fulfilling their brilliant karmic potential. The monks' inspiration soon reached a rare peak when their learned meditation master solemnly confirmed that both boys had reached full enlightenment. The monks were thrilled to hear that two new arahants had appeared in the world. It is understood in the Theravāda tradition, with some justification (Miln 7,2), that should a layperson attain to full enlightenment, then they must quickly join the Sangha or else they will pass away in a matter of days. So certain was this great teacher of the boys' attainments that he had them both ordained that very day. Sometime later, one of the boys was taken to see a doctor about some minor ailment. The doctor prescribed surgery. Not understanding that surgery was done under an anesthetic, the boy "arahant" became alarmed. He was clearly afraid. As mentioned above, genuine arahants have no such fear. Thus it became clear, first with one boy and then with the other, that they were not fully enlightened after all. One of the most accomplished meditation masters in his country had been completely mistaken. If such a learned and competent teacher can make such an error, so can we.

Some people assume that persons with psychic powers must be at some high stage of enlightenment, but they are misinformed. The Buddha's cousin, Devadatta, had amazing psychic powers, but he wasn't even a stream winner. Later, he lost his powers and tried to kill the Buddha (Vin 2,7,2,5). Psychic powers are not a reliable sign of enlightenment.

In the *Sunakkhatta Sutta* (MN 105), a layman asked the Buddha about the monks who, he heard, had claimed full enlightenment in the presence of the Buddha. He wanted to know whether or not all those monks were arahants. The Buddha replied that some of them were arahants; some were not.[46] Thus, what someone claims about their own attainments was unreliable even in the time of the Buddha. In fact, it is an offense against the *vinaya* (the monastic precepts) for a monk or a nun to claim a stage of enlightenment to a layperson (*pācittiya* 8). So a person in robes who makes such a claim in public is deliberately breaking their precepts, making their claim even more dubious. When establishing the monastic precept, the Buddha had recognized how easy it was to overestimate one's own attainments. So it is best to keep quiet about them, except to one's teacher. As one nun said,"If you become enlightened, don't tell anyone, or else you'll spend the rest of your life having to prove it!"

When assessing one's own progress, it is advisable to know the signs of each stage of enlightenment first and then investigate, without vanity and over a long period of time, to see which signs are there and which signs are missing. One should not rush into claiming any stage of enlightenment; rather, one should wait, perhaps for years, before one is sure. One should let ongoing experience test the attainment, as shown in the following story.

The Monk Who Was Unafraid of Tigers

In late 1980 in the remote Thai mountain monastery of Poo Tork, the great forest monk, Tan Ajahn Juan, related this monk's tale to me.

Late one afternoon, a forest monk entered a poor village in the middle of a jungle. It was the custom then for monks who wandered in search of solitude to announce their arrival in the nearest village, so that the devout Thai villagers could expect them for alms round on the next morning. The villagers promptly warned the monk of a ferocious tiger roaming the surrounding jungle that had already killed and eaten many of their water buffalo and even some of the villagers.

"I am no longer afraid of death," boasted the monk. For he sincerely thought that he was already enlightened.

The villagers didn't believe him.

"Show me where the tiger track is," said the monk defiantly. "I will meditate there all night."

The villagers led the monk deep into the jungle to a place where the tiger's track crossed one of their own paths. It was a long way from the village. The confident monk calmly set up his monk's mosquito net and umbrella, and then shooed away the villagers so that he could meditate in quiet. The villagers were impressed.

In the forest tradition of Northeast Thailand, many monks meditate using the mantra "buddho." As one breathes in, one mentally notes "bud," then as one breathes out one notes "dho": "bud-dho, bud-dho," along with the breath.

Once the darkness settled most of the jungle insects, the monk became very peaceful. "Buuuuuud—dhoooooo," he noted as his breath grew smooth, slow, and refined. Then he heard a sound of some animal moving in the jungle. As he paid attention to that sound, he noticed his breath get a little shorter, "buuud—dhooo."

The sound increased. Not daring to open his eyes, he mentally assessed that the sound must be from a largish jungle animal coming in his direction. His breath was now very loud and very short, "bud-dho, bud-dho, bud-dho."

The sound increased. This must be a huge animal. So he opened his eyes. In the place of "bud-dho, bud-dho," he found his mantra automatically change to "ti-ger, ti-ger"! Not far away, and coming straight toward him was this gigantic monk-eating tiger. Losing all of his mindfulness, except for his new mantra, he leapt out from under his mosquito net and began running to the village. “TI-GER! TI-GER!” His new mantra grew louder the faster he ran.

Now, it is against the monastic rules for a monk to run, and there is a good reason for this. The reason is that a monk’s robes have no buttons or zips but are held together only by ingenious folding and lots of mindfulness. When a monk runs, robes are apt to become undone. Then they slip down, trail behind on the ground, and eventually fall off completely. And this is precisely what happened to that monk who thought he was so enlightened that he had no fear of tigers.

He arrived in the village shouting his mantra at the top of his voice, “TI-GER! TI-GER!” and woke everyone up. He was by this time as bare of robes as his head was bare of hair. Those villagers never forgot that forest monk whose claim to be fearless was exposed, along with other embarrassing things, that night.

Conclusion

Letting Go to the End

Summary of the Method

THE METHOD is one of renouncing attachments, otherwise known as letting go. Such renouncing begins with generosity, which is why we don't have any donation boxes in our Buddhist centers ; instead we call them "letting go boxes." Then one renounces those actions of body or speech that cause harm to another or to oneself, which is another way of saying that one lives morally by following the precepts. After this, one renounces thinking and the body, together with the five senses, through the practice of Buddhist meditation. Then one renounces the doer to enter the world of jhāna, the jewel box within the heart of meditation. Lastly one renounces the delusion of a persisting essence, a me, mine, or self, thus removing the wrong view that separates this world from nibbāna.

This book has focused on the renunciation that is called meditation. The first stage was renouncing the paradigm of time to enter the meditation state of timelessness, or present-moment awareness. Then one learned to renounce the tyranny of inner speech, thinking, in order to enter the bright, sacred peace of silent present-moment awareness. Next, one developed the way to partially renounce the body and its five senses by focusing on just one bodily function, the breath, to the point where nothing else remained. Then one completely renounced the body and the five senses to reach, via the beautiful breath, the stage of the nimitta. Soon, one proceeded to renounce the doer in order to enter the jhānas. Then one gradually renounced the only thing left, the knower, or mind, to gain access to the delicious higher jhānas and through them the gossamer-like immaterial attainments. In summary, Buddhist meditation is a gradual method of renunciation. One may now appreciate why the Sangha, the community of Buddhist monks and nuns, comprises what are called renunciants.

Please don't be scared by the word renunciation. The way of renouncing is also the way of happiness. As one gradually lets go, happiness gradually increases. In the suttas, the Buddha describes this path of meditation as a natural process:

> For one who is virtuous, there is no need to will, "May I be free from remorse." Freedom from remorse arises automatically in one who is virtuous.
>
> For one free from remorse, there is no need to will, "May I be glad." Gladness arises automatically in one who is free from remorse.
>
> For one who is glad, there is no need to will, "May I be joyful." Joy arises automatically in one who is glad.
>
> For one who is joyful, there is no need to will,"May my body be tranquil." Tranquillity arises automatically in one who is joyful.
>
> For one who is tranquil, there is no need to will, "May I have inner happiness." Inner happiness arises automatically in one who is tranquil.
>
> For one who is happy, there is no need to will, "May my mind enter samādhi." Samādhi [jhāna] arises automatically in one who is inwardly happy.
>
> For one who has jhāna, there is no need to will,"May

> I see things as they truly are." Seeing things as they truly are [wisdom] arises automatically in one who has jhāna. (AN X,2)

Thus, from harmlessness (virtue) one gets gladness, joy, tranquillity, inner happiness, the bliss of jhāna, and the freedom that flows from wisdom. These are all different forms of happiness occurring in a gradual and natural progression. The process of renunciation, or ever-increasing happiness, culminates here in seeing things as they truly are, which is enlightenment. And enlightenment is the greatest happiness of them all. In the *Dhammacetiya Sutta* (MN 89,12), King Pasenadi remarked how much he enjoyed visiting the Jeta Grove monastery because he would always see happy, smiling monks. The Buddha acknowledged that this is how it is when one successfully develops one's meditation.

So the method described in this book is a happy path, a blissful path, a blow-your-mind-with-ultimate-ecstasy path! The more one renounces what is only suffering, the more one experiences real happiness. So much for the method. Now for the goal.

Goals

“The best of all communities,” in the Buddha’s opinion, “is where the elder monks are frugal and diligent, not neglecting time in seclusion, and where their energies are aroused to attain what is yet to be attained, to understand what is not yet understood, and to realize what is still to be realized” (AN III,93). So it is clear that the Buddha taught that there were goals to achieve. His disciples were well aware that there were spiritual attainments to be worked for. The very highest rewards were on offer, but only to those committing everything to the task. The suttas make clear that Buddhist practice is unsuitable for those who are lazy. Only the arahants have nothing more to do (MN 70,12), and even those fully enlightened ones often tirelessly work for the ultimate welfare of others.

In this book I have promoted the attainment of many spiritual goals. They are some of the most sublime achievements accessible to people in today’s world. Moreover, they include the most wonderful goal of all, full enlightenment, which is the same achievement as the Buddha’s.

Some say that there is nothing to attain. Those who follow such misinformed advice, of course, achieve nothing. Just their foolishness remains, as thick as ever. And this is seen by others in the turmoil that unabandoned greed and ill will create in their lives. To be born as a human being is a very precious opportunity for progress on the path of wisdom, but sadly it is all too often wasted in languid lounging or pointless pursuits. As for the Buddha, he advised that one should practice the training with the same sort of urgency as if one’s clothes were on fire.[47] So much for wasting time.

Goals and No-self

Buddhist goals are infinitely different from worldly goals. Whereas mundane goals usually strengthen the sense of self and are bound up with acquisitions, Buddhist goals lead only to selflessness and to the abandoning of all possessions. This is the fundamental difference that makes aspirations to attain Buddhist goals so distinct from the cravings of the world.

Wise teachers rightly warn against striving for worldly goals, for in the end it invariably leads to frustration. Either one fails to achieve the goal and gives up, or else the achievement when won is experienced as much less than expected. As Oscar Wilde famously said, "In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it."

The spiritual goal of jhāna can be achieved only through great skill in letting go. One does not acquire anything in the achievement, except for the knowledge of what it is like to be free from one's body as well as from thought. Moreover, deep insights based on such experiences of profound letting go are incapable of leading to pride. How could they? These are realizations that undermine the very illusion of a self from which arrogance arises. Wherever no self is seen, pride cannot stand.

So the goals recommended in this book are very different from the goals that are pursued in the world. Since these goals that the Buddha praised lead only to spiritual positives, they deserve to be placed in the forefront, as focuses of one's aspirations, and developed without fear. Only when one has such a clear goal will there be the possibility of spiritual progress.

To illustrate how Buddhist goals differ from worldly goals, imagine a football team comprised of highly attained Buddhists. Since letting go is their prime concern, they would be constantly and joyfully passing the ball to their opponents. Since compassion is their practice, should the opposing team have difficulty scoring a goal, then the Buddhists would kindly help them. And since generosity is their very nature, the more points that they give away, the better their kamma. Then, at the end of the season, should the Buddhist team be banished from the league, they would rejoice in the similarity of their plight to being expelled from saṃsāra!

Real Buddhists do think differently. Their goals are never at another's expense. They aspire to give away all possessions, and they delight in losing things.

Raising the Bar

In this book, I have recommended the goals of jhāna and the four stages of enlightenment. The Buddha, as we saw, called these *uttari-manussa-dhamma,* "states that surpass normal human experience." By raising the bar regarding what meditators should aspire for, I am urging meditators to stretch high. A good coach always extends their students beyond their presumed limits in order to excel. And why not excel in the highest and best goals of all, those proclaimed by the Buddha? It is still possible to achieve uttari-manussa-dhamma in this very life. This book challenges you to try.

As well as championing these attainments, I have described the path in detail. This path focuses mainly on the causes and less on the results. For when one gazes too long and longingly on the great goal, one neglects investing time and energy into cultivating the causes that generate the goal.

For example, someone bemoans the fact that the dishes in their kitchen are all so dirty."Oh! When will my dishes be clean? I want all my dishes to be sparkling!" But they become discouraged when they see the size of the task. Someone else considers, "How can my dishes become clean?" and then begins the work that is the cause of clean dishes—washing them! Soon, as regularly happens when one does the washing up, the dishes become clean and sparkling. The goal is achieved.

Similarly, someone bemoans the fact that they have yet to reach jhāna. "Oh! When will my mind reach bliss? I want my mind to sparkle in jhāna!" But they are discouraged by the size of the task. Someone else considers,"How can this mind enter a jhāna?" and then begins the work that is the cause for entering jhāna—letting go of the doer and the five senses. Soon, as regularly happens when one follows with precision the instructions of the Buddha, one's mind enters jhāna and sparkles. The goal is achieved.

Raising the bar is not the cause of frustration. Wrong attitude is the cause. Spending too much time longing for the goal and not enough time working on the causes—that is what causes frustration and disables achievement.

Unearthing Attachments

When aiming for jhāna one will encounter many hurdles. These obstacles are one’s attachments. Those without attachments can enter any jhāna without difficulty, as a natural abiding for their mind. Aiming for jhāna unearths these attachments. When aiming for something less, one does not meet the root attachments and may think they do not exist. So aiming for jhāna also serves the purpose of digging deep enough to uncover these root attachments, confront them, and then transcend them by entering the jhāna.

It is easy to delude oneself that one is free of attachments. Some cigarette smokers delude themselves into thinking that they can give up smoking at any time, but they just don’t plan to give it up today. Until one has tried to give up smoking, one is unaware of the power of the addiction. In the same way, until one has tried to reach jhāna, one cannot comprehend the subtle force of one’s attachments. Furthermore, when one has tested one’s freedom from attachments by the ability to enter a jhāna, only then can one be sure that one has dealt with them all.

For example, most meditators do not realize how attached they are to sound. Even though background speech is none of their business, nor is the sound of the traffic outside, most find it impossible to turn off their hearing and pay no attention to sound. They are unable to let it go because of their strong attachment to hearing. They identify with being the one who hears. Letting go of sound and enjoying total silence, then, is like letting go of part of their identity. That is *attachment*. To enter the states of deep meditation, one must center the mind beyond the reach of all sound, untying this knot of attachment until one is incapable of hearing anything. In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta,* the Buddha was in such a state of nonattachment while meditating at Ātumā that he heard nothing during a violent thunderstorm (DN 16,4,33).

Most people are deeply attached to thinking. That is why they cannot stop thinking when they need, for instance, to go to sleep. Most people celebrate thought and value their ideas as their most personal property. Thinking is the tool by which they control their own world, both outer and inner. Letting go of thought and entering into mindful silence means dropping the attachment to control of their domain. Such letting go is terrifying to control freaks, and all who cannot enter jhāna are in fact control freaks! They are attached to controlling and thereby to thinking. But when one has the guts to let go of this commentary of inner control, that is, thinking, one experiences the bliss of inner silence. Only then does one comprehend that thinking is an attachment that blocks peace of mind.

Clinging to this body and its five senses, to this doer and its thinking, is the root attachment blocking jhāna. Just as one proves nonattachment to cigarette smoking by giving it up, one proves nonattachment to the body, the five senses, and thoughts through entering a jhāna.

Stories of Letting Go

The instructions in this book take the meditator beyond these root attachments.You enter inner realms where the five senses cannot disturb you and where thoughts cannot move, but where mindfulness glows blissfully. Here are some stories about letting go.

Striking a Deal with My Mind

I spent my sixth rains retreat as a monk completely alone in a remote mountain hermitage in the highlands of northern Thailand. After a while my meditation began to fall apart. The harder I tried to subdue my restless mind, the more vigorously it wandered. Unmonkish thoughts of lust and violence would overwhelm my defenses and play at will with my mind. Soon, it was getting out of hand, but I had no companion to help me. One day, in desperation, I made a solemn resolution before the great Buddha statue in the main hall. I made a deal: for one hour every day, from three to four every afternoon, I would permit my wanton mind to think whatever it liked. Sex, violence, romance, even the most deviant fantasies would be allowed in that hour. In return, I asked that my mind stay with the breath for the rest of the day.

It did not work quite as I'd planned. For most of the first day, my mind was as rebellious as ever. It refused to agree to follow my breath. It kicked and bucked violently like a wild horse at a rodeo. Then at three in the afternoon, to keep my agreement, I gave up the struggle. I leaned against the wall of my hut to rest my aching back, stretched out my legs before me to ease my sore knees, and gave permission to my mind to do whatever it wanted. To my astonishment, for the next sixty minutes my mind followed every breath with the greatest of ease. It seemed as if it didn't want to do anything else, only be with the breath! That experience taught me the difference between letting go and trying to let go. It was one of the most dramatic lessons in letting go.

Further along the path leading to jhāna, there are some more advanced lessons in letting go. One misses these lessons if one does not aim for reaching jhāna. One can learn to let go so completely of the five senses that they totally disappear for a while, as I discovered to my great relief in my first year as a monk.

Ajahn Mosquito

It was my kamma to be one of the first six monks sent by Ajahn Chah to establish his training monastery for his Western monks. The dense piece of rain forest that would become Wat Pa Nanachat had no halls, no huts, no toilets, not even sleeping platforms. We all had to sleep on the jungle floor with only a mosquito net as protection from whatever crawled or slithered in the shadows of the jungle undergrowth. Even worse, at dusk every day we would sit for several hours in the open under the trees for the evening service. Together with Ajahn Chah and some fifty or sixty villagers, we would chant first and then meditate for one hour. Unfortunately, this was the time in the sultry jungle that the mosquitoes would assemble seeking out their dinner. I was their supper! There were no mosquito coils or repellent in those early days. Moreover, as a Buddhist monk I couldn't swat them. They had free rein. We just had to endure it, defenseless and bald.

Together with a young American monk, I would play a game of counting how many mosquitoes would bite my bare flesh at the same time, to see which one of us could count the most. I would count to sixty or seventy before stopping, because the bites were too close to count separately. It was unbearable, and I often prepared to run. But when I opened my eyes, I would see Ajahn Chah and all the villagers sitting so still that my pride would not permit me to flee. So I took the nightly torture until I learned how to let go of my body. Soon I could let go so effectively that I couldn't feel my body anymore. I went deep within my mind, at peace, happy, well beyond the reach of those irritating mosquitoes. It was my means of escape. I now thank those benevolent mosquitoes for teaching me how to let go.

It is of interest to realize that when one faces one's death, one will have to let go of this very same body. By learning to let go of one's body well before the time of death, by aiming for jhāna, one overcomes all fear of the dying process. One learns to let go of the five senses whenever one wants. One then has the power to be unmoved by disturbing sights, to be quiet in booming noise, and to be totally at ease amid piercing pain. When one has learned the lesson in letting go that severs the connection between the mind and the five senses, then one has learned how to let go of attachment to the body.

Learning How to Do Nothing

Letting go, slowing down, and stopping are not only essential for attaining enlightenment, but also crucial to surviving ordinary life. Stress, which is caused by not knowing how to do nothing, is the quintessential weapon of mass destruction. So many diseases, both mental and physical, are caused by stress. Even three and a half centuries ago, the French philosopher Blaise Pascal recognized this when he said,"All the troubles of man come from his not knowing how to sit still."

Some of the time there is nothing to do. Yet at such times you are unable to do nothing. You have forgotten how. So you struggle meaninglessly. If you were wise, when there's nothing to do then you do nothing! It makes so much sense.

We all need to learn how to do nothing so that at the right times we can rest and relax. Fortunately, for those with no opportunity to go to a monastery, teachers are available in great numbers in most modern cities. They are found at the major crossroads. They are traffic lights. When the red light appears it says "Stop!" That's letting go practice. Have you learned how to do nothing at the red traffic lights? Or does only the vehicle stop while you speed on? If so, then an opportunity is being wasted. At the red light, you can open your mind to the present and allow unexpected beauty and peace to appear all around you. I have heard, but not yet seen, that in the capital city of spiritual India, New Delhi, when the red light appears it shows the five letters *r, e, l, a*, and *x*: *relax*. They are not stoplights, they're relax lights. What a great idea. If it ain't true, it ought to be!

If you don't take time to learn how to do nothing, if you are unable to relax at the red traffic lights of life, then you will soon be *forced* to stop in an early grave. As the old saying goes, "Death is nature's way of forcing you to slow down." I recommend meditation over a premature death.

Letting Go of the Water Buffalo

When one hasn’t yet learned how to do nothing, how to let go and relax, one generates more problems in life than are necessary. The following story occurred when I was a monk in Northeast Thailand, and it shows how letting go can save a lot of unnecessary pain and injury.

Early one morning a local rice farmer tied a rope around the neck of his water buffalo and led it out of his village to the paddy fields to graze. As he was passing by our monastery, his buffalo took fright and began to run away. The villager held on to the rope in an attempt to restrain the frightened animal. As the buffalo charged off, the rope wound around the farmer’s finger and took the top third of his finger off! We saw the poor farmer as he came into our monastery for help. His finger was all bloody with a stump of bone showing above the ripped flesh. We took him immediately to the local hospital, fixed him up, and he was soon back at work with one finger shorter than before.

The moral of this story is that if anything as strong as a water buffalo wants to run off, it is sensible to let them go. Water buffalo don’t go far, only a couple of hundred yards, and then they stop. Once they’ve calmed down, the farmer can easily walk after them and bring them back safely. That way many fingers are saved. There are many people who act like a water buffalo sometimes. It may be your partner, your son, or your mother-in-law, who gets out of line. When they’re rampaging it is sensible to let them go. You’ll only injure yourself painfully if you try to rein them in. Wait and do nothing. Soon they’ll calm down, and then you can do something.

For instance, a meditator recently asked me how she could control her “water buffalo” of a mind during meditation. “Let it go,” I answered, “Soon it will stop and come back to you.” I reminded her of another anecdote from a disciple who had a six-year-old son. One day her son was so upset that he announced to his mom, “I’m leaving home!” The very wise mother, living in a safe neighborhood, said “OK!” and helped him pack his small bag, even making him some sandwiches for his life’s journey. She waved him off at the door. Of course, the six-year-old only went a couple of hundred yards down the road before he missed home. Then he promptly turned around and walked back into his waiting mom’s arms.

The meditator with the uncontrollable mind couldn’t stop giggling as I told that anecdote. She explained that the very same thing had happened to her when she was seven years old in Singapore. She told her mother that she wanted to leave home. Not only did her mother pack her bags but she gave her a little money as well. She didn’t even manage two hundred yards away from her door before she returned. Now she knows how to deal with a “water buffalo” mind.

When any problem is as strong as a water buffalo, then let it go. Situations change, fires burn out, and floods recede. When the water buffalo stops charging, then you can do something effective to solve the crises of life. So learning how to let go and relax is not only for the purpose of enlightenment, but it is also for the purpose of surviving

Life Ain't Heavy (When You Know How to Let Go)

Leaving aside the crises of life, even on ordinary days meditation helps one carry the burden. Following my teacher, Ajahn Chah, I often explain the meaning of meditation, together with its benefits, by holding up a glass of water at arm's length.

"How heavy is this cup?" I ask. Before anyone can answer, I continue, "The longer I hold it, the heavier it feels. If I keep holding my glass for ten minutes, then it starts to feel heavy. If I remain holding it thus for twenty minutes, then my arm will begin to ache. And if I am still holding this glass of water at arm's length after one hour, then not only will I be in great agony, but I will also be a very stupid monk. So what should I do when my glass becomes too heavy to hold comfortably?"

"Put it down," they answer. Of course. The problem is not the weight of the glass. It is holding the glass for too long, not knowing how to let it go and rest one's arm for a while. You only need to put down the glass for a few minutes. Then, having rested, you pick it up again and carry it easily.

In the same way, the problem of stress has nothing to do with the weight of your duties. The problem is that you hold on to your responsibilities too long, not knowing how to put them down for a while and rest your mental faculties. You only need to let go of your concerns for a few minutes to reap the benefits of relaxation. Then, having rested in meditation, you can pick them all up again. Now they actually feel lighter. You can carry them further, without any stress, until the next time that they need to be put down.

Putting down your heavy glass for a few minutes, or letting go of all your worries for a short while, is an ability learned through meditation. Meditation is *the* training in letting go. So meditation is not being irresponsible and abandoning your duties forever. It is not goofing off. Meditation is the exercise that empowers you with the ability to put down your burden, however heavy, whenever you want, to rest a while so as to pick up that duty later with greater efficiency. Life isn't heavy when you know how to let go.

Total Listening

I passed by my monastery's kitchen one morning and looked through the window. I saw six of our supporters all talking as they prepared our daily meal. There were just six in that room, and all had their mouths open. I began to wonder, if all six people were speaking at once, who was left to do the listening? No one was doing the listening! All were doing the talking. What a waste of breath their talking was!

Unfortunately, the above story is symptomatic of our modern life. Too many are doing the talking, leaving hardly anyone left to do the listening. Marriages break up because of lack of communication. Teenagers turn wild because they feel they're not understood. Clients go elsewhere because their needs are not heard. And nearly all of us grow old still not comprehending the true meaning of life. Why? Because we never learned how to listen totally.

To listen totally, you must shut up. Really shut up. You are either listening or talking; it is impossible to do both at the same time. Here, I don't just mean stopping your external speech, but I mean quieting the inner speech as well. When you are quiet within, only then can you really listen. To listen totally, you have to listen with everything you've got.

It is amazing what information can be gleaned when you listen from the place of inner silence. Some others become convinced that you are psychic and can read their minds. But it is only the power of total listening. It should be obvious that when you need to pick up more of the "signal," then you must lessen the "static" of inner speech. Through such training in mindful silence, all barriers to communication are fully dissolved. You become effortlessly sensitive to the people around you. You generate happy harmony in your family and rich success in your business.

From the place of total listening, you might even hear your own body trying to tell you something. Before coming down with a sickness, the body always gives many warnings. However, very few of us listen to our bodies' signals, because we are too busily engaged in our inner conversation. Even when our bodies scream a desperate warning, begging for a rest, we are too busy thinking to hear the S.O.S. Then we get cancer, heart disease, or some other terminal ailment. Meditators, on the other hand, learn to listen to their bodies from the place of mindful silence. They hear the needs of their bodies, like they hear the needs of their families, and end up living long, happy lives with both.

Total listening generates insight. From silence, you get to know the true nature of things. And the very best insight is realizing life's meaning. Wouldn't it be so wonderful if we all would put aside for a while every dogma, both religious and personal, and just listen to the throb of life with an alert, silent mind? Then we would totally listen to the teaching of life. Life is constantly, patiently, and gently offering us her wisdom, but we are too busy talking to ourselves to ever listen totally. No wonder so few of us ever understand.

Passing Life's Exams

My final examinations at Cambridge University in 1972 were in theoretical physics. It was a tough time. All my university career came down to these last series of exams. All that went before counted for nothing. This was it, pass or fail. My exams consisted of a three-hour written paper in the morning and another three-hour paper in the afternoon, one day after another without any break. I was told that every year at Cambridge at least one student committed suicide during the final exams. Such was the stress. However, I had a competitive edge over my fellow students that enabled me to do well; I had learned how to meditate.

After the morning exam, I never went for my lunch. Instead, I went to my room, sat down on a cushion, and began meditating. The first thing that I became aware of, as you would expect, was the morning examination just completed. I started to worry whether I had answered a question correctly or whether I should have added more explanation. I soon became obsessed with the past, which for me meant the morning exam. It is easy to say that the past is gone, that my morning's exam can't be changed now, and that it makes no sense to worry about it. However, for some it is not that easy to think so sensibly. Most of us worry about the past nevertheless. Fortunately, due to my training in meditation, I found that I could let go of the past. I stopped worrying about the morning exam. Guess what came into my mind next?

Taking over the whole of my thoughts came the afternoon exam due in less than an hour. Should I open my eyes, pick up a book, and do more revision? Often in the past I had done last-minute cramming before an important exam. I don't know if it is the same for others, but whatever I revised at the last minute never came up in the exam. Revising now was a waste of energy. This was rest time, not exam time. Again, my meditation training came to my rescue, and I let go of the future. Meditating between exams in my college room, I entered the rest state of present-moment awareness.

Once in the present, I was shocked. I noticed for the first time that my body was trembling. I had never considered myself to be a nervous person, but there I was, shaking with fear. My nervous trembling was quite understandable given that I was in the middle of my final exams. What shocked me most was that I hadn't noticed it. I had been so preoccupied with my exams that I had paid no attention at all to what my body was doing. In present-moment awareness I began total listening, and I heard my body plead for some rest. By paying gentle attention to my body, it soon calmed down. The trembling stopped. My body was still. Then I could hear my mind pleading.

I noticed I was tired. I became aware how mentally drained I was. I had been too busy to notice this before. Now it became clear to me that, as I put it, I had run out of brain juice. Totally listening to my mind, I heard it ask me to rest and not do anything. So I just sat there. Gradually my mental energy came back. Ajahn Chah later confirmed that mental energy grows out of stillness. By the end of my thirty-minute-long meditation, I was relaxed, bright, and full of energy. My friends later told me that I was the only student to enter the exam hall with a smile on his face. They thought I was cheating and had found out the answers beforehand. I had found the answers, but not to the questions in the exam paper. I had found the answers to stress, and I did very well in those exams.

Life—at school, college, or thereafter—is full of exams. There are many tense days when one is tested sharply and probed very deeply. The experience I've just related is an example of how this meditation helps one pass life's exams, at the university or at the job interview, in one's relationships or in illness, wherever one is put to the test. The smartest examination technique for life is to learn how to let go and fully relax. In other words to learn meditation.

A Holy Place in Your Home

Meditation training is not just for those chasing enlightenment but also for those who are chasing a happier, more meaningful life. If you do not live in a monastery, it is a great help to have a holy place in your house.

It is not that difficult to create an in-house holy place. Many modern houses have family rooms, guest rooms, rumpus rooms, as well as several bathrooms. Wouldn't it be shrewd to include one holy room? If a spare room is not available, then you can always use a quiet corner of your bedroom. Mark out the private corner with your favorite cushions. Then surround it with just the right amount of spiritual symbols and peaceful posters to give it a mood of serenity. Use that corner regularly for your meditation or for listening to or reading something inspiring. Never do anything worldly in your holy corner and always avoid talking there. As the months flow past and the years trickle by, you will discover a gentle "energy of stillness" build up in that space. It soon matures into a special sacred spot. Meditation becomes much easier there because you have made it a place of spiritual power. You have created an authentic holy place in your own house.

One Australian disciple followed my advice and set up a holy place in a corner of her bedroom. She would meditate there regularly, often alongside her husband. One day, she told me, her two young children had a heated argument just outside her front door. Her seven-year-old daughter began crying, ran into the house and into her parents' bedroom. There she sat on her mom's meditation cushion in the holy place, calming her tears. The small girl had never gone there before. Intuitively she found her home's place of peace, the sanctuary in which to heal the unbearable hurt in her little heart. The holy place had become a valuable resource for her whole family.

Even in a busy office, one can create a holy place. I heard of one successful lawyer who desperately needed to meditate at lunchtime to alleviate his considerable stress. He had difficulty finding a private spot where his clients couldn't see him and where the phone wouldn't tempt his ears. There was a small cupboard in his office full of papers and files. So he cleared out that cupboard completely and made it into his holy place. Every lunchtime, his secretary would lock him in his cupboard for thirty minutes meditation. Should a client drop in or the telephone ring, his secretary would gleefully say,"I'm sorry, he's unavailable. He's in his cupboard!" She willingly locks him in his holy place because she knows from experience that he is a much kinder boss in the afternoon having been in his cupboard. He also knows from experience that half an hour spent in meditation is time soon made up through increased efficiency and sharpness of mind. Meditation is an investment of minutes that always returns many hours.

Letting Go beyond Measure

The renowned British scientist Lord Kelvin once said, “If you cannot measure, you cannot control.” He meant, of course, that in order for science to effectively control our world, we must first learn how to accurately measure natural phenomena. Lord Kelvin’s insight into the need for precise measurement was crucial to the growth of technology and to its success in controlling some of the unpleasant aspects of nature.

That gem of truth, however, can also be used the other way round:“If you cannot measure, you cannot control.” If one stops all measuring, then control becomes impossible. Abandoning measurement generates letting go.

While in meditation, do you measure your progress? Do you think, “This is a bad meditation” or “This is a good meditation”? You learn from experience that such measuring of good or bad generates controlling, and that leads to doing something. If you gauge your meditation as bad, then you will struggle to make it good. If you count your meditation as good, then you will strive to make it even better. Having measured, you end up with more doing. Letting go is forgotten, and thus you fall away from the path of peace.

Consider what would happen if there were no measuring at all within your meditation sitting. How would it be if there were no assessments of the type “This is a good meditation,” “This is a bad meditation”? When you give up all measuring, you relinquish control.Your mind becomes the same as a beginner’s mind, one that has yet to learn the measuring scale. Such a mind easily lets go and becomes very peaceful. When you don’t calibrate your meditation, the doing stops. Peace grows, happiness blossoms, wisdom ripens. Finally, the fruit of enlightenment drops in your lap.

Abandon measuring time, and you automatically rest in the timelessness of the present moment. Discard measuring with names, and effortlessly the thinking process stops as you enter into mindful silence. Drop measuring the breath as in or out, long or short, rough or smooth, and the breath disappears to reveal the luminous nimitta. Release the nimitta from the measurement of bright or dull, and you enter the jhānas easily. Renounce measuring the mind with perceptions, and the mind rises smoothly through the immaterial attainments. Stop measuring the citta, and the whole of saṃsāra, including the mind, finally ceases altogether. Nothing is left now, not even nothing.

If you follow the path of meditation, your inner happiness rises like a tide that never ebbs. Mindfulness becomes energized as you struggle less with your inner world. Insights appear in abundance like luscious fruits on a heavily laden tree, too many to pluck and eat all at once. You realize so clearly that the path to peace is this letting go that you learned in meditation. Or you can call it the path of unconditional loving-kindness. Such mettā softens your judgments of yourself and others. Judging and measuring fade away like the phantoms they always were. In the final disappearance of all measuring, words are stolen away, for language is nothing more than the measuring scale for life.

As peace reaches its apex, as happiness crystallizes into a radiant gem at the summit, when measuring finally implodes—the mind disappears as well. One realizes at last that the mind was the measurer.

This is cessation, the ending of everything without any remainder. Nibbāna is where all words lose their meaning because all measuring has stopped. When great sages point to where there is no long or short, no present, no past, no future, no here or there, no birth or death, everything having stopped, this is what they are pointing to. The final mental object, that which signs off from saṃsāra once and for all, and which signals the end of all name-and-form, is absolute cessation. Parinibbāna *is* the last word.

Notes

[1] Unless otherwise specified, all translations from the Pāli are my own and therefore will differ in places from other English translations.

[2] This booklet has been reprinted in English eight times, and it has also been published in German, Sinhalese, Czech, and Russian.

[3] Here I am using Bhikkhus Ñānamoli's and Bodhi's translation of the Majjhima Nikāya, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. 340.

[4] Lewis Carroll, *The Complete Illustrated Works of Lewis Carroll* (London: Chancellor Press, 1982), p. 65.

[5] Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981).

[6] See *upādāna* in *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines,* by Nyanatiloka, 4th rev. ed. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 228.

[7] I have dealt at length with the relationship between *pīti-sukha* and the breath in chapter 7 on ānāpānasati above.

[8] I am using the translation here from the *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology of Suttas from the Aṅguttara Nikāya,* trans. and ed. Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999), p. 36.

[9] Sound can disturb the first jhāna, but when one actually perceives the sound one is no longer in jhāna.

[10] Here I am citing Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), pp. 1252ff.

[11] Here I am using Ñānamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, p. 508.

[12] Sam Parnia and Peter Fenwick, "Near Death Experiences in Cardiac Arrest: Visions of a Dying Brain or Visions of a New Science of Consciousness," *Resuscitation* 52 (2002): 5 (abstract).

[13] Pim van Lommel et al., “Near-Death Experience in Survivors of Cardiac Arrest: A Prospective Study in the Netherlands,” *Lancet* 358 (December 15, 2001): 2044.

[14] Ibid., p. 2043.

[15] Sam Parnia et al.,“A Qualitative and Quantitative Study of the Incidence, Features and Aetiology of Near Death Experiences in Cardiac Arrest Survivors,” *Resuscitation* 48 (2001): 154.

[16] Benjamin Libet, “Unconscious Cerebral Initiative and the Role of Conscious Will in Voluntary Action,” *Behavior and Brain Sciences* 8 (1985): 529-39 (with commentaries, pp. 539-66, and *Behavior and Brain Sciences* 10 [1987]: 318-21).

[17] In Pāli, “that” *(yam)* is singular, which means it refers to one and the same thing, which people call by three different names.

[18] Here I am using Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, p. 595.

[19] For example, the former president of the Pali Text Society, Mrs. Rhys Davids, in her introduction to the first English translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, argued that anattā and the undesirability of craving were both “monkish teachings” and not the Buddha’s teachings (pp. xiv-xv). More recently, Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in his book *The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* that “thus we can infer that the four Meditative States [jhānas]…were instituted after the death of the Buddha” (p. 20).

[20] Ñānamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses,* pp. 454-58.

[21] Here I am using K. R. Norman’s translation of the *Sutta Nipāta,The Group Discourses,* rev. ed. (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1995), p. 26.

[22] Ñānamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses,* p. 260.

[23] Ibid., p. 1083.

[24] Ibid., p. 557.

[25] Goleman, Daniel, narrator, *Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them? A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama.* (New York : Bantam Books, 2003), pp. 338-39. This passage relates a presentation by researcher Richard Davidson of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

[26] Carroll, *Complete Illustrated Works,* pp. 193-94.

[27] Ñānamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses,* p. 283.

[28] In Pāli,“seven” lifetimes is meant to be counted including this present lifetime as the first. The stream winner has at most six more lifetimes.

[29] *Manorathapūranī* (commentary on *Aṅguttara Nikāya*), 3:374. The sutta in question is AN 6,44.

[30] See also Nyanaponika and Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha,* p. 71.

[31] See also ibid., pp. 205-6.

[32] Bodhi, *Connected Discourses,* p. 1329.

[33] Ñānamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses,* p. 674.

[34] See also Nyanaponika and Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses,* p. 231.

[35] See also Bodhi, *Connected Discourses,* p. 1433n236.

[36] See also ibid., p. 230.

[37] See also ibid., p. 544.

[38] See also Nyanaponika and Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses,* p. 162.

[39] See also ibid., p. 243.

[40] See also Bodhi, *Connected Discourses,* p. 1167.

[41] Ñānamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses,* p. 422.

[42] See also ibid., p. 423.

[43] Nyanaponika and Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses,* pp. 159ff.

[44] See also Nyanaponika and Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses,* p. 171.

[45] See also ibid., p. 2 31.

[46] Ñānamoli and Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses,* p. 861.

[47] Here I am using Bodhi, *Connected Discourses,* p. 1859.

Mindfulness Techniques

The Art of Mindfulness for Busy People

Sung Yang

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Many people tell me that they are busy and have no time to practice mindfulness. People also tell me that mindfulness practice is difficult. I wrote this book to help those who couldn't find time to practice mindfulness and those who experienced difficulty with mindfulness practice.

Are you very busy? Do you still have time to breathe, drink or eat? Then you have time for mindfulness practice.

Are mindfulness techniques too difficult to practice? Are you currently sitting, standing or lying down while reading this book? Are you inhaling or exhaling while reading this book? If you are capable of answering any of these questions, you can practice mindfulness with ease.

For your practice, this book contains numerous easy and simple mindfulness techniques that you can practice in your busy daily life.

How to Use This Book

This book is intended to be a reference. You do not have to read this book from cover to cover in order to benefit from this book. You can select the technique of your interest and start from there. Some techniques do require prerequisites. In such case, the required techniques are specified under prerequisite section, which is usually at the bottom of the page.

Each mindfulness technique described in this book usually comprises two parts: Basic Technique and Advanced Technique. Advanced Technique may be futher subdivided into Advanced Technique 1 and Advanced Technique 2 and so on. (The Advanced Technique may also comprise Optional Technique.) First, you should practice Basic Technique. You may practice Advanced Technique 1 but only after becoming skillful at Basic Technique. Likewise, you may practice Advanced Technique 2 only after becoming skillful at Advanced Technique 1. It also important that you do not rush to move to advanced techniques in your practice. For example, if you are learning 'Mindfulness of Sight While Moving', you may practice the Basic Technique in the first day. If you become skillful at it, you can move to the Advanced Technique 1 but without rushing it. You may start to practice Advanced Technique 1 in the next day. Likewise, if you are skillful at Advanced Technique 1, you can move to the Advanced Technique 2. You can start to practice Advanced Technique 2 in the next day.

You should practice one technique at a time unless specifically instructed. For example, when you are practicing Basic Technique, just practice Basic Technique. Likewise, when you are practicing Advanced Technique 1, just practice Advanced Technique 1.

It depends on your skill level and your life style and preferences, you can use this book in various ways.

You may be A) a beginner who wishes to learn and develop mindfulness and concentration; B) an intermediate practitioner who wishes to expand your mindfulness skills; or C) a newcomer to mindfulness practice who never received mindfulness training but want to learn it.

For beginners and intermediate practitioners, if you already know mindfulness techniques that work well in your daily living, you can continue to use your own techniques. Otherwise you can try mindfulness techniques that are described in this book.

For beginners, you can start to learn from Chapter 2. For newcomers who never received mindfulness training before, my suggestion is that you attend a class or see a mindfulness teacher. You could use this book as a supplement. However, this book is not a substitute for a mindfulness teacher.

If you teach mindfulness, you could use this book as a supplement in your mindfulness teaching.

One size doesn't fit everyone. Likewise, one mindfulness technique would not satisfy everyone's needs and tastes. Some techniques in this book may meet your need or taste while others may not. If any of the techniques does not meet your need, let me know your needs. I will try my best to provide you techniques you need.

Note

Some of the techniques in this book use (mental) labels to help for beginners. As you become skillful at mindfulness practice, you will not need to use labels in your practice. Eventually you should be able to practice it without using labels but awareness alone. Training wheels can be helpful or useful when we are learning to ride a bicycle, however, you will eventually no longer need them. Labels are like training wheels.

Mindfulness techniques in this book are intended as an aid that helps you to develop your mindfulness skills. After developing mindfulness through diligent daily practice with the techniques, you would become skillful at practice and become less depend on the techniques. Eventually you would no longer need the techniques in order to practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness practice is not controlling breath, for example, holding or forcing into a rhythm. Let your body breathe normally instead. (However if you are controlling your breath, be aware that you are controlling your breath.) Likewise, thinking, visualizing or imagining is not mindfulness practice either. (However if you are thinking or visualizing, be aware that you are doing so.) For more on this topic, see Chapter 13: Practice Tips. The same chapter also contains numerous other helpful practice tips such as how to overcome difficulties and how to measure progress of your practice.

Caution

This book contains numerous mindfulness instructions which you can practice in various situations, including experiencing pain or driving a car. The goal of the instruction is to aid mindfulness practice, but neither to get rid of the pain nor teach you how to operate a machine, e.g. a car. Improper use of the instruction can cause an injury. Avoid practicing the technique in this book when there is any chance practicing the technique could affect safety of yourself or others.

The information in this book is not intended to substitute treatment, instructions or advises from healthcare professionals. If you have a medical condition, you should consult a medical professional before using the information in this book for your safety and health.

Chapter 2: Basic

These are elementary techniques, which are provide a basis or often used in other mindfulness techniques.

1. Sounds Awareness

Be aware of all sounds that you hear.

Tip: If you are a beginner, a suitable duration of this practice is 1 or 3 minutes per session.

2. Breath Awareness

Be aware of your breath including inhalation and exhalation.

Tip: If you are a beginner, a suitable duration of this practice is 1 or 3 minutes per session.

3. Body Awareness

Be aware of physical sensations in your body.

Tip: If you are a beginner, a suitable duration of this practice is 1 or 3 minutes per session.

4. Mind Awareness

Be aware of your mind.

If you are having a difficulty noticing your mind, that is OK too.

Tip: If you are a beginner, a suitable duration of this practice is 1 or 3 minutes per session.

5. Mindfulness of Breathing

Before starting the practice, you first need to identify your focus point. A focus point is a body area where you feel the strongest or distinctive physical sensation due to airflow through in your respiratory system while breathing. For example, a focus point can be nostrils, inner nose, throat, an air passage in your chest or your abdomen. The physical sensations in the focus point vary depending on the focus point, for example: faint cool and warm; faint dull and neutral; air moving in and out; expanding and contracting; and rising and falling. See below "How to identify your focus point" for more info.

Basic Technique
Be aware of physical sensation that you experience in the focus point.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of absence of the sensation in the focus point, which occurs briefly between each breath such as in-breath or out-breath.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Tips

- Ideally your mind should continuously remain focused on physical sensations of your breath in the focus point without an interruption during the practice. However, if you lose the focus, simply refocus your mind on the focus point.

How to Identify Your Focus Point:

1. Pay attention to your nose

    a. Be aware of sensations of coolness and warmth while inhaling and exhaling.
    b. Be aware of sensations of faint dull and neutral while inhaling and exhaling.
    c. Be aware of sensations of air moving in and out while inhaling and exhaling.
2. Shift your attention to your mouth area
    a. Be aware of sensations of coolness and warmth while inhaling and exhaling.
3. Shift your attention to your chest area
    a. Be aware of sensations of coolness and warmth while inhaling and exhaling.
    b. Be aware of sensations of expanding and contracting while inhaling and exhaling.
4. Shift your attention to your abdomen
    a. Be aware of sensations of rising and falling while inhaling and exhaling.
5. Pay attention to other part of your body and be aware of breathing sensations while inhaling and exhaling.
6. While performing the above steps, which area of your body did you experience the strongest or distinctive breathing sensation? E.g. Nose, throat, chest, abdomen, head. That body area is your focus point.

Note: It will be even better if you can pin point the body area by narrowing down the area and clearly comprehend the sensation while breathing. Reminder: breathe normally. Do not try to force your breath.

See Also
Mindfulness of Breathing 2
Mindfulness of AMA (Automatic Mental Activities)

6. Mindfulness of Sitting

In this practice, you learn to be aware of body area where you experience pressure while sitting in a chair. These body areas are called pressure points, for example, feet, thigh and buttocks. (See pressure points in the glossary section for more information.)

Basic Technique
Be aware of the body areas where you experience pressure (while sitting).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of specific physical sensations in the body areas (pressure points) such as pulsing.

See Also
How to Monitor Your Heartbeats

7. Mindfulness of Hand Movements

You can use this technique to be aware of your hand movement.

Basic Technique

Be aware of movement your one hand (e.g. right hand) with a set of labels.

- Label 'forward' when your hand moves forward direction.
- Label 'backward' when your hand moves backward direction.
- Label 'left' when your hand moves toward left direction.
- Label 'right' when your hand moves toward right direction.
- Label 'up' when your hand moves toward up direction.
- Label 'down' when your hand moves toward down direction.
- Label 'circular' when your hand moves in a circular motion.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

Combine labels whenever it is necessary. For example, label 'forward left' when your hand moves forward and left direction.

Advanced Technique 1

Practice with awareness alone without using the labels.

Advanced Technique 2

Expand your awareness to movements of both hands at the same time.

Optional Technique 2

Be aware of your intention to move your hand, which occurs just before the movement of your hand.

Optional Technique 3

Be aware of your motivation for moving your hand.

8. Mindfulness of Breathing 2

Basic Technique

Be aware of physical sensation that you experience in the focus point.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Mentally say while practicing the basic technique:

- "I know I am breathing in." (while inhaling)
- "I know I am breathing out." (while exhaling)

Advanced Technique 2

Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Breathing

9. Mindfulness of Breathing 3

Each breath whether it is in-breath and out-breath can be divided into 3 phases: the beginning, the middle and the end. In this practice, you recognize the phase of each breath. While practicing, maintain awareness of the physical sensation that you experience in the focus point.

Basic Technique

- Be aware of the beginning of your breath.
- Be aware of the end of your breath.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the middle of your breath.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Breathing

10.Mindfulness of Joint Angle

You can use this technique to be aware of a joint in your body such as your left knee.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the angle of the join whether it is bent or straight with a set of labels.

- Label 'bent' when the joint is bent.
- Label 'straight' when the joint is straight.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using labels.

See Also
Mindfulness of Finger Joints

11. Mindfulness of Touch

To practice this technique, you pay attention to touch sensation while holding or touching an object such as a pen.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the texture of the object whether it is soft or hard.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the texture of the object whether it is rough or smooth.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the heaviness of the object whether it is heavy or light.

12.Mindfulness of Touch: part 2

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the temperature of the object, such as cold, warm and hot.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of moisture in the object if there is no moisture in the object. Otherwise be aware of the absence of moisture.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of pressure in your hand (or fingers) that is (are) holding the object (or your body part that is touching the object).

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware of the object which you are holding or touching, for example, a pen.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of your feeling whether the touch sensation is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware of your hand, which is holding the object (or your body part that is touching the object).

13.Mindfulness of Sight

Practice this technique while looking at an object, for example, a tree, a pen, a person, or sky.

Basic Technique
Be aware of an object in your sight. (No need to identify)

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the size of the object whether it is big or small.

Advanced Technique 2
Pay attention to the overall shape of the object, for instance, rectangle, round, triangle or other shape.

Advanced Technique 3
Pay attention to the dominant color of the object.

14.Mindfulness of Sight: part 2

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of the distance between the object and your eyes.

Advanced Technique 5
Identify the object, which you are seeing, for example, a tree.

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware of an object is being identified (recognized or perceived) as something specific, for example, as a tree.

Advanced Technique 7
Be aware of your eyes.

Advanced Technique 8
Be aware that you are seeing at the object.

Advanced Technique 9
Be aware of feeling whether the sight is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Advanced Techniques 10
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: a pattern in the visual object; texture; and arising of mental contents in your mind.

15.Mindfulness of Taste

In this technique, you be aware of specific tastes of food while eating.

Basic Technique

Be aware of sweetness while eating food. However if there is no sweetness in the food, just be aware of absence of sweetness.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Be aware of saltiness while eating food. However if there is no saltiness in the food, just be aware of absence of saltiness.

Advanced Technique 2

Be aware of sourness while eating food. However if there is no sourness in the food, just be aware of absence of sourness.

16.Mindfulness of Taste: part 2

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of bitterness while eating food. However if there is no bitterness in the food, just be aware of absence of bitterness.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of spiciness (piquancy) while eating food. However if there is no spiciness in the food, just be aware of absence of spiciness.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware of the dominant taste among other tastes.

Optional Technique 3
Be aware of feeling whether the taste is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Optional Technique 4
Be aware of your tongue.

17.Mindfulness of Smell

You can use this technique when you smell something.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the dominant smell whether it is sweet, floral, fruity, putrefaction-like, spicy, burned, paint-like or something else.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the intensity of the smell whether it is weak, strong or intolerable.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the source of the smell, for instance, a flower.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of feeling whether the smell is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Optional Technique 5
Be aware of your nose.

18.Mindfulness of Sight While Moving

This technique can be practiced while you are moving, for example, walking, running, or riding transportation. It is easier to practice this technique while you are moving slowly, e.g. walking rather than driving a car.

The three following figures illustrate appearance and disappearance of objects, which are the key concept of this technique. First, we are walking toward a side of a building, we see a side of the building (Figure 1).

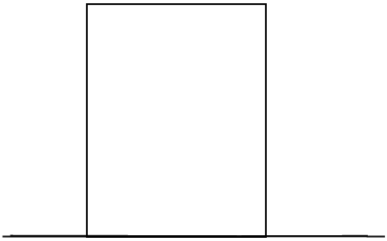


Figure 1. A side of a building.

As we walk from the side of the building to the front, a door of the building has appeared (Figure 2).

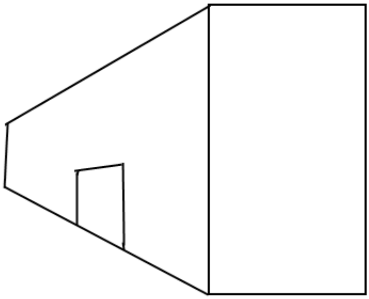


Figure 2. A side and front of a building.

As we continue to walk to the front, the side wall of the building has disappeared from the scene (Figure 3).

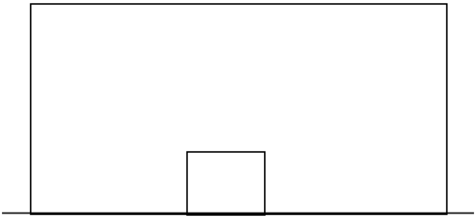


Figure 3. A front of a building.

This kind of phenomena occurs each time we walk or drive. If we are mindful, we can easily notice it.

Basic Technique
Notice appearance of an object (in your sight while moving).

In other words, be aware when an object has appeared from behind another object. For example, a door has emerged in your sight, referring to Fig 2. above.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Notice disappearance of an object (in your sight while moving).

In other word, be aware when an object has disappeared into behind another object. For example, the side wall has disappeared and is no longer visible in your sight, referring to Fig 3. above.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice both Basic Technique and Advanced Technique at the same time.

Note
Although the above example identified object (in order to provide an example to readers), you do not need to identify the object that appears or disappears in your practice. This technique is about to be aware appearance or disappearance.

.

The following 3 figures also demonstrated appearance and disappearance of objects while we are moving.

We are walking toward a side of a building, we see a side of the building (Figure 4).

Figure 4. A side of a building.

As we are walking to the front of the building from the side of the building, another building, which was hidden behind the building, appears (Figure 5).

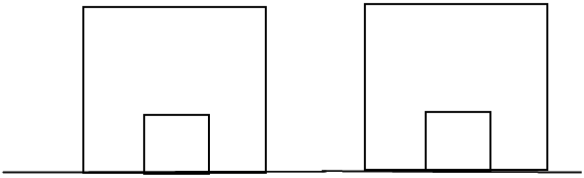


Figure 5. A front of two buildings.

As we continue to walk to the other side of the building, a building disappears behind the other building (Figure 6).

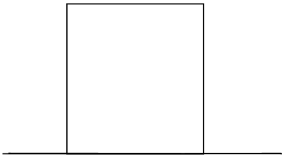


Figure 6. The other side of a building.

19.Mindfulness of Sight While Moving 2

This is similar to Mindfulness of Sight While Moving, however, we are aware of the process (either appearing or disappearing) rather than completion (either has appeared or disappeared). You can practice while walking or riding a car.

Basic Technique

Notice an object is appearing (in your sight as you are moving).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Notice an object is disappearing (in your sight as you are moving).

Advanced Technique 2

Practice both Basic Technique and Advanced Technique at the same time.

20. Mindfulness of Sounds with Counting

You can use sounds in your surrounding as objects of your mindfulness practice. The sound may include noise from computer, refrigerator, traffics, dog barking, clock ticking, bird chirping and whatever the sound you can hear. You can use this technique in a park, a train, a store or any other places or occasions. You could practice even while walking.

Basic Technique

1. Just listen to all sounds in your surroundings.
2. Identify how many different kinds of sounds you hear at the same time.

21.Mindfulness of the Loudest Sound

Basic Technique

1. Just listen to all sounds in your surroundings.
2. Identify the loudest sound among all different sounds.

22.Mindfulness of Continuous Sounds

In this practice, you are aware of a continuous sound. A continuous sound is a sound that has no beginning and no ending while you are listening to the sound (in the duration of your practice, for example, 1 minute). In other words, the sound already began but does not end while you are listening to the sound. For example, refrigerator humming noise or ventilation noise.

Basic Technique
Be ware of a continuous sound.

23.Mindfulness of Non-Continuous Sounds

In this practice, you are aware of a non-continuous sound. A non-continuous sound is a sound that has a beginning and an ending while you are listening to the sound (in the duration of your practice, for example, 1 minute). In other words, the sound begins and end while you are listening to the sound. For example, a sound of a passing car. The practice begins with awareness of continuous sounds so that we can distinguish a non-continuous sound when it comes

Basic Technique

1. Be aware a beginning of a sound (when it begins).
2. Be aware an end of the sound (when the sound discontinues.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware when the sound continues.

Optional Technique 2
Identify source of the sound. e.g. a refrigerator, a car, a bird.

Optional Technique 3
Be aware of your ears.

See Also
Mindfulness of Continuous Sounds

24. Mindfulness of Sounds

Basic Technique

1. Select a sound among all different sounds in your surroundings, for example, most distinctive sound or the loudest sound.
2. Be aware of whether it is continuous or non-continuous sound

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of pitch - whether sound of frequency is high or low.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of a pattern in the sound. Otherwise be aware of the absence of patterns if there are no patterns in the sound.

25.Mindfulness of Sounds: part 2

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware the direction- where the sound is coming from.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of distance- how far the distance the sound is coming from.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware whether the source of sound is moving or not.

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware of duration of the sound whether short or long if it is a continuous sound.

Advanced Technique 7
Be aware of gap or silence in between sound if it is a continuous sound.

Advanced Technique 8
Be aware of an echo if there is any.

Advanced Technique 9
Be aware of harmonic effect of sound if it is being combined with another sound.

Advanced Technique 10
Be aware if any quality of the sound changes.

26.Mindfulness of Sounds: part 3

Advanced Technique 11
Be aware of the source of the sound, for example, a refrigerator, a car, a bird.

Advanced Technique 12
Be aware of the source of the sound is being identified (recognized or perceived) as something specific, for example, a refrigerator, a car, a bird.

Advanced Technique 13
Be aware of your ears.

Advanced Technique 14
Be aware that you are listing to a sound.

Advanced Technique 15
Be aware whether the sound is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Tips: It is easier to practice on the sound of nature. When listen to human speech, you can just pay attention to sounds of the speech instead of meanings of the speech. If it is still difficult, first practice while listening to a speech in a foreign language, which you do not understand.

See Also
Mindfulness of Sounds with Counting
Mindfulness of the Loudest Sound
Mindfulness of Non-Continuous Sounds
Mindfulness of Continuous Sounds

27.Mindfulness of Muscle Contraction

This technique can be used while you are contracting your muscles, for example, biceps muscle when you are doing biceps curl. For another example, you contract muscles in your legs and feet while running or walking.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of physical sensations from the contracting muscle, for example, tightening, fatigue, warming, burning and tearing.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Also be aware of the muscle that is contracted, for instance, biceps muscle.

Advanced Technique 2
Also be aware of feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

28.Mindfulness of Muscle Stretching

This technique can be used while you are stretching your muscles, for example, the shoulder muscle when you are stretching your shoulder.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of physical sensations from the stretching muscle, for example, relaxing, untightening, tightening, discomfort, warming, burning and tearing.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Also be aware of the muscle that is stretched, for instance, shoulder muscle.

Advanced Technique 2
Also be aware of feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

29.Mindfulness of Motion

You can practice the following technique while riding a train, bus, car, airplane, ship, boat, canoe, roller coaster and so on.

Basic Technique
Notice direction of motion. For example, front, rear, upward or downward. For another example, east, west, south and north.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
B aware of speed change of motion. For example, it is whether increasing, decreasing, or unchanging.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of speed of motion. For example, slow or fast.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of absence of motion when motion paused or stopped momentarily.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of sounds that are generated as a result of the motion.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of accompanying vibrations.

30.Mindfulness of Vibrations

You can be aware of vibrations while riding a train, bus, car, airplane, ship, boat, canoe, roller coaster and so on.

Basic Technique
Be aware of begin and end of vibration.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of direction of vibration- left, right, front, back, up and down.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of speed of vibration (quick, slow).

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: pattern (of vibration); stillness in between vibration; sudden or gradual; and scale of vibration such as big, small.

31.Mindfulness of Walking

Basic Techniques
Label 'forward' when your foot moves forward direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
If you are turning direction while walking, be aware of your foot movement with a set of labels.

- Label 'left' when your foot moves toward left direction.
- Label 'right' when your foot moves toward right direction.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of your hand movement with a set of labels.

- Label 'forward' when your hand moves forward direction.
- Label 'backward' when your hand moves backward direction.

However, if there is no hand movement, just be aware of stillness of your hands.

Optional Technique 1
Notice texture or condition of the ground such as soft, hard, even, uneven, slippery, uphill, downhill, and so on.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware if the texture or condition of the ground changes.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

See Also
Mindfulness of Foot Movements
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
How to Monitor Your Heartbeats
Mindfulness of Touch

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Standing

32.Mindfulness of Walking 2

Basic Techniques
Be aware of pressure in your feet while walking.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware the pressure point is shifting from one foot to the other while walking.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of specific pressure points such as toes and heel.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware the pressure point is shifting from one point to another, for instance, from heel to toes while walking.

Advanced Technique 4
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 5
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

See Also
Mindfulness of Foot Movements
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
How to Monitor Your Heartbeats

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Standing

33.Mindfulness of Finger Joints

In the following practice, you use the 3 hand signs which are used in the rock-paper-scissors hand game.

1. Be aware of bent finger joints when clenching a fist (the rock hand sign).
2. Be aware of straight finger joints when you open your hand (the paper hand sign).
3. Be aware of bent finger joints and straight finger joints when you extend only two fingers from your hand (the scissors hand sign).

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Joint Angle

34.Mindfulness of Feelings

Feelings in this book refer to the 3 feelings: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. These feelings arise when you experience physical sensations or thinking about something.

Basic Technique

1. Pay attention to feelings in your body for 1 minute.
2. Pay attention to feelings in your mind for 1 minute.

Note

If you are having a difficult differentiating between a physical sensation and a feeling, try the followings:

1. Hold a pen in your hand as usual as if you are going to write something.
2. Be aware of physical sensation.
3. Be aware of neutral or pleasant feeling based in the physical sensation
4. Hold the pen tight (to apply much pressure to the pen with your fingers).
5. Be aware of physical sensation (of pressure)
6. Be aware of an unpleasant feeling based in the physical sensation.

35.Mindfulness of Feelings 2

Basic Technique

1. Label 'pleasant' when a pleasant feeling arises.
2. Label 'unpleasant' when an unpleasant feeling arises.
3. Label 'neutral' when a neutral feeling arises.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

In the above practice, also be aware of the source of the feeling whether it is body or mind. For example, "pleasant in the body". " neutral in the mind".

Advanced Technique 2

Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

Optional Technique

You can be more specific to the source of the feeling. For example, leg, memory.

36.Mindfulness of Body Tension

With this technique, you can be aware of tension in your body.

Basic Technique
Be aware of tension, discomfort or tightness in your body.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Identify specific areas of your body where you experience the tension, discomfort or tightness, such as shoulders, neck and chest.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of unpleasant feelings.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware of mental contents such as anger, stress, desire, anxiety, worry, hatred, grief and regret.

See Also
Mindfulness of Muscle Contraction
Mindfulness of Unpleasant Feeling

37.One Mindful Breath

One mindful breath can make a difference. Try it when you want to calm your mind that is under influence of agitation, anger, stress or other disturbing emotions. You can also try one mindful breath when you feel drowsy but you do not want to fall a sleep. You can practice one mindful breath in any other occasions whether you are sitting, standing, lying down, walking or in a meeting as well as waiting for someone on the phone, green lights in an intersection, or a web page to be loaded on your computer screen. If you practice one mindful breath regularly, you will become more skillful at it and one mindful breath is likely to become more effective. It is also good after waking up, before eating a meal after finishing a meal.

Basic Technique

Mentally say:

- "I know I am breathing in." (while inhaling)
- "I know I am breathing out." (while exhaling)

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

In the above steps, practice with awareness alone without using labels.

Note

This is neither a breathing exercise nor thinking about breathing. Breathe normally without any attempt to control your breath.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Breathing (or Mindfulness of Breathing 2)

38.Half Mindful Breath

It is same as One Mindful Breath except that we are aware of only inhalation.

Basic Technique

Mentally say:
- "I know I am breathing in." (while inhaling)

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
In the above steps, practice with awareness alone without using labels.

See Also
One Mindful Breath

39. Mindfulness of Mind

Basic Technique

Be aware that your mind is calm when your mind is calm. However, be aware that your mind is not calm when your mind is not calm, for instance, busy or agitated.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Be aware that your mind is focused when your mind is focused (on something). However, be aware that your mind is not focused (or scattered) when your mind is not focused.

Advanced Technique 2

Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

40.Mindfulness of Mental Contents

Mental contents are something that occurs (or exists) in your mind, for example, thoughts, images, memories, concepts, feelings, perceptions and intentions. You can be aware of mental contents in your mind with this technique.

Basic Technique

Be aware whatever occurs in your mind in the present moment.

Note: this practice is not about thinking or visualizing but simply noticing what is there in your mind.

41.Mindfulness of Mental Contents 2

Basic Technique
Be aware of a worry if a worry is in your mind. Otherwise be aware of absence of worry.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of anger if anger is in your mind. Otherwise be aware of absence of anger.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware a feeling if a feeling is in your mind. Otherwise be aware absence of a feeling.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of a perception if a perception is in your mind. Otherwise be aware of absence of a perception.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of other mental content if other mental contents are in your mind. Otherwise be aware absence of other mental contents.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Mental Contents

42.Mindfulness of Mental Activities

This practice is to be aware of mental phenomena (activities or events). This can be done by being aware of arising and passing of any mental content, for example, thoughts, feelings, memories, and images. (If you are having a difficulty of noticing of mental activities, you can consider everything you experience are as mental activities except 5 senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch.)

Basic Technique

- Label 'arising' when something (a mental content) occurs in your mind or a mental activity begins.
- Label 'passing' when something (a mental content) ceases to exist in your mind or a mental activity ends.

Note: Just aware of arising and passing events in the mind but nothing else. You do not need identify the specific nature of the mental activity, for example, whether it is positive, negative, good or bad.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques

Advanced Technique 1
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Mental Contents

See Also
Mindfulness of AMA

43. Mindfulness of AMA (Automatic Mental Activities)

Automatic mental activities refer to mental activities that occur without your conscious will. This practice is a combination of Mindfulness of Breathing and Mindfulness of Mental Activities.

Basic Technique

1. Silently pledge that you are going to pay attention to your breath.
2. Be aware of your breath.
3. Label 'arising' if a mental activity begins. Label 'passing' if a mental activity ends. Otherwise, continue to be aware of your breath.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Breathing
Mindfulness of Mental Activities

44.Mindfulness of Attraction

When you are having a pleasant experience, there is a reaction to the pleasant experience. With the following technique you can be aware of the reaction in your mind.

Basic Technique
Be aware of wanting (desire) to prolong the pleasant experience.

Note
If you do not have pleasant experience in the present moment, you can recall a pleasant memory in order to practice this technique.

In an advanced technique, label 'remembering' while recalling the situation.

45.Mindfulness of Aversion

When you are having a unpleasant experience, there is a reaction to the unpleasant experience. With the following technique you can be aware of the reaction in your mind.

Basic Technique
Be aware of wanting (desire) to avoid or get rid of the unpleasant experience.

Note
If you do not have unpleasant experience in the present moment, you can recall an unpleasant memory in order to practice this technique.

In an advanced technique, label 'remembering' while recalling the situation.

Chapter 3: Essentials

46.Mindfulness of Foot Movements

You can use this technique to be aware of your foot movement.

Basic Technique
Be aware of movement your feet with a set of labels.

- Label 'forward' when your hand moves forward direction.
- Label 'backward' when your hand moves backward direction.
- Label 'left' when your hand moves toward left direction.
- Label 'right' when your hand moves toward right direction.
- Label 'up' when your hand moves toward up direction.
- Label 'down' when your hand moves toward down direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Combine labels whenever it is necessary. For example, label 'forward up' when your hand moves forward and up direction.

Optional Technique 2
Practice with awareness alone without using labels.

Optional Technique 3
Be aware of your intention to move your foot, which occurs just before the movement.

Optional Technique 4
Be aware of your motivation for moving your foot.

47.Mindfulness of Head Movements

You can use this technique to be aware of your head movement.

Basic Technique
Be aware of movement your head with a set of labels.

1. Label 'left' when your head turns toward left direction.
2. Label 'right' when your head turns toward right direction.
3. Label 'up' when your head moves toward up direction.
4. Label 'down' when your head moves toward down direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using labels.

Optional Technique 2
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your intention to move your head which occurs just before the movement; your motivation for moving your head; and other experiences.

48.Mindfulness of Eye Movements

You can use this technique to be aware of your eye movement while doing eye movements such as up, down, left, right and circle.

Basic Technique
Be aware of movement your eyes with a set of labels.

- Label 'up' when your eyes moves up direction.
- Label 'down' when your eyes move toward down
- Label 'left' when your eyes move toward left direction.
- Label 'right' when your hand moves toward right direction.
- Label 'circular' when your eyes move in a circular motion.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the labels.

49. Mindfulness of Upper Body Movements

To be aware of movements of your upper body, apply the techniques described in Mindfulness of Head Movements to your upper body movements.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Head Movements

50.Mindfulness of Feeling on Sounds

1. Just listen to all sounds in your surroundings.
2. For each sound, be aware of feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

51.Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze

You can practice this technique while you are not moving. For example, you could practice this technique while standing and waiting in a store or sitting in a park bench or looking out the window.

Basic Technique

- Softly gaze at an object that is not moving and maintain the gaze on the object throughout this practice. For example, a tree, a building.
- Be aware of an appearance of a moving object. For example, when a bird, a car, a pedestrian came into your sight, be aware of it.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Be aware of an disappearance of a moving object. For example, when a bird, a car, a pedestrian cease to exist in your sight, be aware of it.

Note

Although the above example identified object (in order to provide an example to readers), you do not need to identify the object that is moving or not-moving in your practice. This technique is about being aware of appearance and disappearnce, but not awareness of object, which has appeared or disappeared.

52. Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze: part 2

Advanced Technique 2

Notice the speed of the moving object whether it is slow or fast.

Advanced Technique 3

Notice the direction to which a moving object is moving.

Advanced Technique 4

Identify the moving object. For example, a bird, a car, a group of people.

Optional Technique 1

Identify objects that are not moving in your sight. For example, a tree, a house.

53.Body Scan

The body scan technique involves be aware of physical sensation in each part of your body for some moments (about 10 to 30 seconds). There is nothing for you to do. Also no need to visualize your body during the practice- this is not a visualization practice.

Basic Technique

1. Pay attention on your left foot and notice or feel any sensation.
2. Shift your attention to left lower leg and notice or feel any sensation.
3. Shift your attention to your left upper leg.
4. Repeat the above steps with right leg.
5. Continue to shift your attention to next body part (such as abdomen, back, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, mouth, eyes, ears, nose) until reaching your head.
6. Notice the whole body including the skin.

Sensation experience examples: temperature; touch of fabric or other object on your skin; weight on your feet or buttocks; muscle tightness; pain; itchiness; moving sensation (rise and fall of belly while breathing); air flowing in and out in your respiratory system; and pulses.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique

While practicing the basic technique, you can pay attention to specific or narrow area of your body, for example, instead of the entire leg, you can divide your leg into lower, middle and upper part, or even further divide into details, for example, foot, toes, ankle, shin, knee, thigh. Furthermore, you also pay attention to internal organs as well as your body systems like respiration, digestion and circulation.

The respiratory system may include lungs, diaphragm, nasal passage, nose, trachea. The digestive system may include mouth, esophagus (the tube from mouth to stomach), stomach, small and large intestines. The circulatory system may include heart, blood vessels.

Advanced Technique 2

Expand your awareness to various physical sensations during the body scan practice. See physical sensation list in glossary for detail.

See Also: Mindfulness of Pain

54.Mindfulness of Standing

Use the techniques described in Mindfulness of Sitting while you are standing.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Sitting

55.Mindfulness of Lying Down

Use the techniques described in Mindfulness of Sitting while you are lying down.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Sitting

56.Mindfulness of Body Positions

1. When you are standing, be aware you are standing.
2. When you are sitting, be aware you are sitting.
3. When you are lying down, be aware you are lying down.

57.Mindfulness of Arising-Passing of Feelings

Basic Technique

- Label 'arising' when a feeling arises.
- Label 'passing' when a feeling passes.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

In the above practice, also add label 'pleasant', 'unpleasant' or 'neutral' in addition to 'arising' or 'passing' when a feeling arises or passes. For example, label 'arising pleasant' if a pleasant feeling arises. Label 'passing unpleasant' if an unpleasant feeling passes

Advanced Technique 2

In the above practice, also label the source of the feeling whether it is body or mind. For example, "arising pleasant feeling based in the body". "passing unpleasant feeling based in the mind".

Prerequisites

5. Mindfulness of Feelings

58.Mindfulness of Pleasant Feeling

You can practice the following technique when you have a pleasant feeling in the present moment. For example, you are eating your favorite food.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the pleasant feeling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the source of the feeling whether it is body or mind.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware your wanting to prolong the pleasant feeling.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of intensity of the feeling whether it is mild or strong.

Note
If you do not have pleasant feeling in the present moment, you can recall a memory or an image, which will make you feel pleasant, for the sake of this practice. For example, thinking of someone you love.

59.Mindfulness of Unpleasant Feeling

You can practice the following technique when you have an unpleasant feeling in the present moment. For example, you have hunger, itchiness, pain, leg numbness.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the unpleasant feeling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the source of the feeling whether it is body or mind.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware your wanting to avoid the unpleasant feeling.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of intensity of the feeling whether it is mild or strong.

Note
If you do not have unpleasant feeling in the present moment, you can recall a memory or an image, which will make you feel unpleasant, for the sake of the practice. For example, thinking of someone you dislike.

60.Mindfulness of Six Sense-Consciousness

We train our mind to be aware of the six sense consciousness, i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, perceiving. We normally pay attention to a particular object in a mindfulness practice, for example, breath, which is the object of the attention when you practice Mindfulness of Breathing. In this practice, we do not limit our attention to a particular object but open attention to all phenomena that are occurring (arising or passing) in the present moment (here and now). This practice is also known as Objectless Mindfulness Practice or Mindfulness of Present Moment.

Basic Technique
Silent say 'hearing' when you hear a sound.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Silent say 'touching' when you notice a physical sensation.

Advanced Technique 2
Silent say 'perceiving' when a mental event occurs.

Advanced Technique 3
Silent say 'seeing' when you see something.

Advanced Technique 4
Silent say 'smelling' when you smell something.

Advanced Technique 5
Silent say 'taste' when you taste something.

Note: When you are aware of multiple events at the same time, you can choose either. Alternatively, you can choose whichever is the dominant experience. For example, when you see a bird and hear chirping sound at the same time. You can choose either 'sight' or 'hearing'.

61.Mindfulness of Hand Movements 2

Basic Technique
Synchronize your hand movements with your breath.

- moving up while inhaling.
- moving down while exhaling.
- moving to left while inhaling.
- moving to right while exhaling.
- moving to forward while inhaling.
- moving to backward while exhaling.
- moving a circular motion (first half circle) while inhaling.
- moving a circular motion (the rest of half circle) while exhaling.

Note: your hand movements follows your breath but not the other way around.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Further synchronize beginning, middle and ending of your hand movement with beginning, middle and ending of your breath.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of both movements and breath at the same time with clarity.

Prerequisite
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

62.Mindfulness of Eye Movements 2

Basic Technique
Synchronize your eye movements with your breath.

- moving up while inhaling.
- moving down while exhaling.
- moving to left while inhaling.
- moving to right while exhaling.
- moving a circular motion (first half circle) while inhaling.
- moving a circular motion (the rest of half circle) while exhaling.

Note: your eye movements follows your breath but not the other way around.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Further synchronize beginning, middle and ending of your eye movement with beginning, middle and ending of your breath.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of both movements and breath at the same time with clarity.

Note: If you experience a difficulty in your eye movements, it is help to use markings on the wall (or use an imaginary markings) to guide your eye movements. The marking may consists of 10 vertical dots, 10 horizontal dots and 12 additional dots to form a circle around the vertical and horizontal dots. They may look like a radar screen.

Prerequisite
Mindfulness of Eye Movements

Chapter 4: Eight Mindful Breathing

The Eight Mindful Breathing, as the name implies, consists of 8 mindful breathing techniques. The Eight Mindful Breathing techniques are highly effective in calming body and mind. So you can practice them to calm your body and mind. You can also practice them just before starting Mindfulness of Breathing if your mind is busy or not easily calm. Thus the Eight Mindful Breathing techniques usually practiced as a set. However, some of the techniques are also suitable to practice as an individual technique.

At the end of this chapter, a summary of Eight Mindful Breathing is included for your reference. For an advanced practice, see Advanced Eight Mindful Breathing in the Chapter 10.

Mindful breathing is not a breathing exercise. You should breathe normally without any attempt to control your breath.

Prerequisite
Mindfulness of Breathing

63.Mindful Breathing 1

When you breathe in, be aware that you are breathing in. When you breathe out, be aware that you are breathing out. For example, while breathing in, silently say: "I know I am breathing in". While breathing out, silently say: "I know I am breathing out".

Note. Your mind should remain focused on your focus point while doing this practice. When you become skillful, do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

64.Mindful Breathing 2

When you breathe in a long breath, be aware that you are breathing in a long breath. When you breathe out a long breath, be aware that you are breathing out a long breath. For example, while breathing in a long breath, silently say: "I know I am breathing in a long breath". While breathing out a long breath, silently say: "I know I am breathing out a long breath".

However, when you breathe in a short breath, be aware that you are breathing in a short breath. When you breathe out a short breath, be aware that you are breathing out a short breath. For example, while breathing in a short breath, silently say: "I know I am breathing in a short breath". While breathing out in a short breath, silently say: "I know I am breathing out a short breath".

65.Mindful Breathing 3

Combine breath awareness with body awareness. When you breathe in, be aware of your breath and your body. When you breathe out, be aware of your breath and your body. For example, while breathing in, silently say: "breathing in, I am aware of my whole body ". While breathing out, silently say: "breathing out, I am aware of my whole body".

When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your focus point. When you say "I am aware of my whole body", pay attention to your body. You could shorten the phrases. For example, "Breathing in, body. Breathing out, body". For more info, see Summary of Eight Mindful Breathing.

66.Mindful Breathing 4

As you breathe with consciousness, you will notice your body functions begin calming down. When you breathe in, be aware of calming down of your body. When you breathe out, be aware of calming down of your body. For example, while breathing in, silently say: "breathing in, I calm my whole body". While breathing out, silently say: "breathing out, I calm my whole body". When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your focus point. When you say "I calm my whole body", pay attention to your body.

67.Mindful Breathing 5

Conscious breathing and calming body will bring you pleasant feeling. You recognize (or acknowledge) joyful or pleasant feelings as they arise. For example, while breathing in, silently say: "breathing in, I feel pleasant". While breathing out, silently say: "breathing out, I feel pleasant".

When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your focus point. When you say "pleasant", pay attention to the pleasant feeling.

Note: If you are not experiencing pleasant feeling, you can skip this practice.

68.Mindful Breathing 6

As we aware of pleasant feeling, the pleasant feeling is transformed into peace and happiness. You recognize (or acknowledge) happiness as it arises. For example, while breathing in, silently say: "breathing in, I feel happy". While breathing out, silently say: "breathing out, I feel happy".

When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your focus point. When you say "happy", pay attention to the happy feeling.

Note: If you are not experiencing happiness, you can try gratitude practice. If you are still not experiencing happiness, you can skip this practice.

See Also: Mindfulness of Gratitude Toward Eyes

69.Mindful Breathing 7

Combine breath awareness with mental content in your mind.

When you breathe in and out, be aware of your breath and mental activities in your mind. For example, while breathing in, mentally say: "breathing in, I am aware of mental activities". While breathing out, mentally say: "breathing out, I am aware of mental activities".

When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your focus point. When you say "I am aware of mental activities ", pay attention to mental activities in your mind.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Mental Activities

70.Mindful Breathing 8

As you continue to breathe with consciousness, you will notice your mind begins calming down.

When you breathe in and out, be aware of calming down of your mind. For example, while breathing in, mentally say: "breathing in, I calm my mind". While breathing out, mentally say: "breathing out, I calm my mind".

When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your focus point. When you say "I calm my mind", pay attention to your mind.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Mind

Summary of Eight Mindful Breathing

Long Form

1. "I know I am breathing in"…
2. "I know I am breathing in a long (or short) breath." …
3. "Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body." …
4. "Breathing in, I calm my whole body." …
5. "Breathing in, I am aware of pleasant feeling." …
6. "Breathing in, I am aware of happiness." …
7. "Breathing in, I am aware of my mind." …
8. "Breathing in, I calm my mind." …

Short Form

1. "I know I am breathing in" …
2. "I know I am breathing in a long (or short) breath." …
3. "Breathing in, body." …
4. "Breathing in, calm." …
5. "Breathing in, pleasant." …
6. "Breathing in, happy." …
7. "Breathing in, mental activities." …
8. "Breathing in, calm."…

Note: "…" indicates the omitted phrases. For example, an omitted phrase is "Breathing out, my body" in technique 3. As you see, the technique is the same as when you breathing in. Thus, it is omitted in the above.

Chapter 5: Daily Activities

71.Mindfulness of Hand Movements and Breathing

You can use this technique to be aware of your breath and hand movements.

Basic Technique
Be aware of movement your one hand (e.g. right hand) with a set of the following phrases:

- Silent say "breathing in, forward" when your hand moves forward direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, backward" when your hand moves backward direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, left" when your hand moves toward left direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, right" when your hand moves toward right direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, up" when your hand moves toward up direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, down" when your hand moves toward down direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, circular" when your hand moves in a circular motion.

Note: When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your breath. When you say a direction of movement, for example, "forward", pay attention to the movement.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Combine labels whenever it is necessary. For example, label 'forward left' when your hand moves forward and left direction.

Optional Technique 2
Practice with awareness alone without using the labels.

Optional Technique 3

Be aware of movements of your both hands at the same time.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Hand Movements

Eight Mindful Breathing

72.Mindfulness of Washing Hands

Hand washing provides a unique and convenient occasion to practice mindfulness. Practice this technique while leisurely washing your hands with soap.

Basic Techniques

Be aware of softness of your hand skin.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of slipperiness while rubbing hands.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the wetness sensations when your hands are contact with water.

73. Mindfulness of Washing Hands: part 2

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of tingling like sensation in your hands if the water is running.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of temperature of water such as cold, warm or hot.

Advanced Technique 5
Notice feeling weather it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

See Also
Mindfulness of Touch

74. Mindfulness of Washing Hands: part 3

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware of movements of your hands and fingers whether it is rubbing, scrubbing or twisting.

Advanced Technique 7
Be aware of the speed of your hand movements.

Advanced Technique 8
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: sensations you experience in your hands such as pressure, slipperiness, and temperature; area of your hands where you experience such sensations, for example, palms, backs of your hands, wrists, fingers, finger tips, fingernails, and joints; changing of sensation while washing your hands; sound of running water; patterns in water, fragrance of soap; motivation for washing hands; body posture; awareness of washing hands; breath; and feelings or thoughts.

75.Mindfulness of Drying Hands with a Towel

You can practice the following technique while you drying your hands with a towel.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of dryness of your towel. (However if towel is wet, be aware wetness.)

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the wetness in your hands.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the dryness in your hands.

76.Mindfulness of Drying Hands with a Towel: part 2

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the area of your skin that you are dry.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of the area of your skin that you are wet.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware that your hands are becoming drying.

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware that your hands are becoming less wet.

Advanced Technique 7
Be aware of softness of your towel.

Advanced Technique 8
Be aware of the specific hand area which you are drying, for example, your left palm.

Advanced Technique 9
Be aware of feelings whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Advanced Technique 10
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: hand movements; pressure points; awareness of drying hands; different sensations in your skins before/after drying; and other experiences.

See Also
Mindfulness of Touch

77.Mindfulness of Drying Hands Using Air Dryer

You can use the following technique while drying your wet hands using air hand dryer in a public washroom.

Basic Technique
Notice temperature of the wind.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of intensity of the wind.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware whether the physical sensation you experience on your hands is whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware whether your feelings whether it changes. For example, your feeling changes from pleasant feeling to neutral or unpleasant feeling.

Optional Technique 2
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your hands rubbing movements if you do; moisture in your hands; the specific area in your hands where the air is hitting the hardest; awareness of drying hands; your breath; and thoughts or feelings.

78.Mindfulness of Driving

You can apply the following technique while you are driving a car.

Basic Technique

1. Label 'starting' when your car is starting. For example your car is starting to move.
2. Label 'stopping' when your car is stopping. For example your car is stopping at a traffic light.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Label 'turning' when your car is turning. For example, you make a left or right turn at an intersection.

Advanced Technique 2
Label 'changing' when your car is changing a lane. For example, your car is changing a lane in a road.

Advanced Technique 3
Label 'approaching' when you are aware that your car is approaching something. For example, you are aware of your car approaching an intersection, a traffic sign, another car, or an object.

Advanced Technique 4
Label 'passing' when you are aware that your car is passing something. For example, you are aware of your car passing an intersection, a tree or another object.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6

Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 1
Do the practice with awareness alone without using labels. For example, when you are changing a lane, be aware that you are changing a lane.

Optional Technique 2
When you stopped at a traffic light, take One Mindful Breath.

Optional Technique 3
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: road signs, traffic lights, surrounding traffics, pedestrians, roads, safety rules, scene, sky; your lane whether left, right, center lane; direction of your car movement whether front, back, left, right, uphill or downhill; speed change of your car whether increasing, decreasing or unchanging; current speed of your car whether slow, fast, normal; your breath, heartbeats; your hands holding steering wheel; your foot touching the gas pedal or break pedal when you do so; sound from your car and other traffics; awareness of driving; and laws and safety rules.

Caution: Avoid using the above technique when there is any chance this practice could affect safety of yourself or others. This is not a driving instruction. Comply with all the traffic laws and the safe driving rules while driving. The technique is only for experienced safe drivers only. Turn off audio or any distraction.

See Also
One Mindful Breath

79. Mindfulness of Walking with Counting

Practice this technique while you are walking normally (without rushing).

Basic Technique

Count each of your foot step while walking. Start counting from 1. When you count until 5 or forgot to count, start counting from 1 again.

80.Mindfulness of Walking and Breathing with Counting

1. Start to count your foot step when you inhale.
2. Start to count your foot step when you exhale.

Repeat the above step 1 and 2 while walking.

81.Mindfulness of Walking Indoor

This technique is suitable to practice indoor.

Basic Technique

1. Label 'lifting' when you lift a foot from the floor (or ground).
2. Label 'going' when your foot is moving forward.
3. Label 'touching' when your foot touches the floor (or ground).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your weight is shifting from one foot to another while walking.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of your intention to move your foot, which occurs just before the movement of your foot.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Technique 1
Synchronize your walking steps with your breath. (e.g. 5 steps per each breath)

Optional Technique 2
Do the entire practice with awareness alone without using any labels. For example, when you are lifting your foot, be aware that you are lifting your foot.

82.Mindfulness of Forwarding and Breathing

Basic Technique

Silently say:

1. "Breathing in, forward."
2. "Breathing out, forward".

Note: When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to the focus point. When you say "forward ", take one step forward with awareness on the movement of your foot.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Breathing

83. Mindfulness of Walking and Breathing

Basic Technique

Mentally say:
1. "Breathing in, I am aware of walking."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of walking."

You can abbreviate the above phrases into: "Breathing in, walking. Breathing out, walking". When you say 'breathing in', you pay attention to your in-breath. When you say 'walking', you pay attention to your walking experiencing such as movement, sounds or sight.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites
Mindful Breathing 3

84. Mindfulness of Walking Outdoor and Breathing

This technique is suitable to practice outdoor.

Basic Technique

Mentally say:

1. "Breathing in, I am feeling pleasant."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of walking."
3. "Breathing in, I am aware of appearing."
4. "Breathing out, I am aware of disappearing."

You can abbreviate the above phrases into: "Breathing in, pleasant. Breathing out, walking. Breathing in, appearing. Breathing out, disappearing." When you say 'breathing in', you pay attention to your breath. When you say 'walking', you pay attention to your walking experiencing and so on.

Note

If you can not find pleasant feeling, you can say "I'm feeling neutral or unpleasant."

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique

Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Sight While Moving
Eight Mindful Breathing

85.Mindfulness of Walking 4

Practice the following techniques while walking.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of condition of the ground or floor whether it is soft or hard.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of condition of the ground whether it is even or uneven.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of condition of the ground or floor whether it is wet or dry.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of condition of the ground or floor whether it is flat or hill (uphill or downhill).

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of material of the ground or floor, for example, concrete, asphalt, grass, carpet, mud, gravel, wood.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

See Also
Mindfulness of Touch

86.Mindfulness of Tooth Brushing

Basic Technique
Be aware of sensation in your teeth and gum while brushing, whether it is tickling, sensitive or something else.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of pressure on your teeth and gums from toothbrush bristle.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of texture of toothbrush bristle whether it is soft or hard while the bristle touches your teeth and gums.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

See Also
Mindfulness of Head Movements
Mindfulness of Standing

87.Mindfulness of Tooth Brushing 2

You can use this technique to be aware of your hand movement while brushing teeth

Basic Technique
Be aware of movement your hand holding the toothbrush with the methods described in Mindfulness of Hand Movements.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of movement your head if there are any movements. Otherwise, be aware of absence of your head movements.

Optional Technique
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: sound of brushing, body posture, and your breath.

See Also
Mindfulness of Head Movements

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

88.Mindfulness of Tooth Brushing with Counting

You can practice this technique while brushing your teeth.

Basic Technique

1. Start to brush your teeth normally with your toothbrush or as directed by your dentist.
2. Be aware that you are brushing your teeth.
3. Count the brushing motion, up and down as a one. Start counting from 1.
4. When you count until 5 or you forgot to count, start counting from 1 again.

See Also

Mindfulness of Tooth brushing

89.Mindfulness of Shaving

You can use the following instruction while you are shaving your face with an electric shaver.

Basic Technique
With a set of labels, be aware of movement of your hand that is holding the shaver.

1. Label 'up' when your hand moves toward up direction.
2. Label 'down' when your hand moves toward down direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: sounds of the shaver, vibration of the shaver, your thought, feeling, your body posture and your breath.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

Caution: Avoid using the above technique when there is any chance this practice could affect safety of yourself or others. Pay adequate attention to safety, especially safety instructions from the manufacturer of the electric device while using the above technique.

90.Mindfulness of Shaving 2

You can use the following instruction while you are shaving your face with an electric shaver.

Basic Technique
Be aware of physical sensation of cutting hair in your face.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of pressure in the area that the electric shaver touches

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of pressure in your feet while loading. (For more information about pressure points, see Mindfulness of Sitting.)

Optional Technique 2
Be aware of pressure in your fingers while holding electric shaver.

Optional Technique 3
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your breath, sounds of the shaver,
vibration of the shaver, your thought, feeling, your body posture, and other mental or physical experiences.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Hand Standing

Caution: Avoid using the above technique when there is any chance this practice could affect safety of yourself or others. Pay adequate attention to safety, especially safety instructions from the manufacturer of the electric device while using the above technique.

91. Mindfulness of Drinking a Cup of Tea

Basic Technique

1. Label 'lifting' when you are lifting a cup of tea to your mouth.
2. Label 'sipping' when you are sipping the tea.
3. Label 'tasting' when you are tasting the tea.
4. Label 'swallowing' when you are swallowing the tea.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

See Also
Mindfulness of Taste
Mindfulness of Smell

92. Mindfulness of Drinking a Cup of Tea 2

Basic Technique

While lifting the cup, be aware of your hand movement with the following labels:

1. Label 'up' when your hand moves toward up direction.
2. Label 'down' when your hand moves toward down direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Be aware of specific taste, for instance, sweetness, saltiness, bitterness and other taste.

Advanced Technique 2

Be aware feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Optional Technique 1

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: pressure points, smell, your bodily reaction, your mental reaction, your breath and awareness of drinking.

93.Mindfulness of Eating

Basic Technique
Be aware what you are eating.

For example, if you are eating sandwich, be aware that you are eating a sandwich.

94. Mindfulness of Eating with Four Stages

Eating may be divided into four stages. You can be aware of the four stages while eating.

Basic Technique

1. Label ' lifting' (or 'carrying') when you carry food to your mouth.
2. Label 'chewing' when you are chewing the food.
3. Label 'tasting' when you are tasting the food.
4. Label 'swallowing' when you are swallowing the food.

See Also

For Eating (in Practice Tips)

95. Mindfulness of Eating and Movements

Basic Technique

Be aware of your lifting hand movements with labels while eating.

1. Label 'up' when you are moving your hand to carry food to your mouth – as a result your hand moves toward up direction.
2. Label 'down' when you are moving your hand to toward down direction after carrying food.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your jaw movements.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware whether jaw movement is fast or slow.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

See Also
For Eating (in Practice Tips)

96.Mindfulness of Eating 2

Basic Technique
Be aware of hungry sensation in your body if you have hungry sensation.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of unpleasant feeling based on the hungry sensation if you have the hungry sensation.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of wanting to avoid the unpleasant feeling if you have the unpleasant feeling.

Advanced Technique 3

5. Label 'carrying' (or 'lifting') when you carry food to your mouth.
6. Label 'chewing' when you are chewing the food.
7. Label 'tasting' when you are tasting the food.
8. Label 'swallowing' when you are swallowing the food.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of your bodily reaction while eating, e.g., as salivation, tensing muscles, easing muscles.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of your mental reaction while eating, e.g., urge to devour food, desire to not to eat.

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware of sweetness while eating food. However if there is no sweetness in the food, just be aware of absence of sweetness.

Advanced Technique 7

Be aware of saltiness while eating food. However if there is no saltiness in the food, just be aware of absence of saltiness.

Advanced Technique 8
Be aware of changing taste of food while chewing.

Advanced Technique 9
Be aware of changing texture of food while chewing,.

Advanced Technique 10
Be aware of changing temperature of food while chewing.

Advanced Technique 11
Be aware of changing feeling (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral) while chewing.

Advanced Technique 12
Be aware of specific ingredients of the food, for example, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, herb, oil.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of factors that allowed the food came into in your hands, for example, farmers, sun, clouds, soil and truck drivers.

Advanced Technique 13
Be aware of all eating experience (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences) such as taste, texture, feeling, and sound of chewing.

See Also
For Eating (in Practice Tips)

97.Mindfulness of Eating 3

Basic Technique
Be aware of the taste of the food (see the technique described in Mindfulness of Taste).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of specific ingredients of the food, for example, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, herb, oil, salt, sugar and pepper.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the dominant smell of the food.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of specific texture, e.g., tenderness, crispness, crunchiness, smoothness and softness;

See Also
For Eating (in Practice Tips)

98.Mindfulness of Eating 4

Basic Technique

Be aware of one or more of the followings while eating:

- taste of food;
- smell of food;
- temperature of food;
- color of food;
- shape of food;
- awareness of eating;
- hands movements;
- your breath;
- sensation in the throat and stomach;
- sounds of chewing;
- your body posture;
- thoughts or feelings that are arising while eating; and
- other physical or mental experiences.

See Also

For Eating (in Practice Tips)
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Taste
Mindfulness of Smell

99.Mindfulness of Opening a Door

You can use the following technique while opening the door of a car, house, refrigerator, cabinet or other facility. You can also use the technique when you are opening a binder cover.

Basic Technique

Label 'opening' while you are opening a door.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Notice appearance of objects that were hidden behind the door as you are opening the door.

Advanced Technique 2

Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Sight While Moving

87. Mindfulness of Opening a Door 2

Basic Technique
Be aware that your hand is touching the door handle (or knob).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique
Be aware of your hand movements while opening.

See Also
Mindfulness of Touch
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

100. Mindfulness of Closing a Door

You can use the following technique while closing the door of a car, house, refrigerator, cabinet or other facility. You can also use the technique when you are closing a binder cover.

Basic Technique
Label 'closing' while you are closing a door.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Notice disappearance of objects behind the door as you are closing the door.

Advanced Technique 3
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: touch sensations, hand movements and body posture.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Sight While Moving

101. Mindfulness of Locking a Door

You can use the following technique while locking the door of a car, house or other facility. Equally you can apply the same technique while unlocking.

Basic Technique
Label 'locking' while you are opening a door.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: holding a key in your hand; secure feeling or insecure feeling if it arises; intention to lock when it arises; and your body posture.

102. Mindfulness of Turning on a Switch

You can use the following technique while turning on a switch, for example, light switch, oven switch, or computer power switch. Equally you can apply the same technique while turning off a switch.

Basic Technique
Label 'on' while you are turning on a switch.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

Optional Technique 1
Before turning on, be aware that your finger is touching the switch.

103. Mindfulness of Vacuuming

You can use the following technique while vacuuming floor. Tip: vacuuming floor leisurely.

Basic Techniques

1. Label 'forward' when you are pushing vacuum cleaner to move forward.
2. Label 'backward' when you are pulling vacuum cleaner to move backward.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of everything you experience in your practice if it is safe to do so (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your breath, your body posture, pressure points, the sound of vacuuming, awareness of vacuuming, your feelings, your thoughts, other mental or physical experiences.

Caution: Avoid using the above technique when there is any chance this practice could affect safety of yourself or others. Pay adequate attention to safety, especially safety instructions from the manufacturer of the electric device while using the above technique.

104. Mindfulness of Watering Plants

Basic Techniques

1. Be aware that you are watering plants
2. Notice (mentally acknowledge) the name of the plant that you are watering. For example, "I'm watering Aloe".

   However if you do not know the name of the plant, just name it as "plant 1". For other plant, you could also name it as "plant 2" and so on. When you name until "plant 10", you can start it again from "plant 1".

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your body posture and your breath.

105. Mindfulness of Wearing Clothes

You can use this technique while wearing your clothes. This technique can also be applied while undressing.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of your hand movement with Mindfulness of Hand Movement techniques.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your body posture with techniques described in Mindfulness of Sitting or Mindfulness of Standing.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of your foot movement with Mindfulness of Foot Movement techniques if there is foot movement. Otherwise, be aware of stillness of your foot.

Optional Technique 2
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your breath, pulses in the pressure points, body posture, sight, your feeling, your thought, and
other experiences.

Tips
Practice the above techniques with different clothes such as t-shirts, jacket, pants, and compare the different movements of your hands and feet while wearing the different clothes.

See Also
Mindfulness of Foot Movements

Mindfulness of Sitting
Mindfulness of Standing

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

106. Mindfulness of Taking Shower with Feeling

You can practice the following technique while you are taking shower as you normally do.

Basic Technique

1. Notice whether the physical sensation you experience on your skin is whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.
2. Monitor your feelings whether it changes. For example, the feeling may change from pleasant feeling to neutral feeling.

107. Mindfulness of Taking Shower

You can practice the following technique while you are taking shower.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of the temperature of the water (whether warm, hot or cold).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of tingling like sensation in your body while your body is contact with the running water.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of softness of your skin.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of slipperiness of your skin.

Advanced Technique 3
Notice the body part which you are washing, for instance, your face.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Optional Technique 2
In the Optional Technique 1, also be aware of your desire to prolong the pleasant feeling or desire to avoid the unpleasant feeling. However if there is no desire, be aware of absence of desire.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Technique 3
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: the sensation of wetness in your body; hand movements; the sounds of the water as it is coming out of the nozzle; the smell of the soap or shampoo, water droplets on the walls; feelings arising or disappearing; thoughts arising or disappearing; the body parts the shower water is hitting; awareness of taking shower; different sensations in your skins before/after drying; and other experiences.

See Also
Mindfulness of Drying Hands with a Towel

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

108. Mindfulness of Washing Dishes

In this technique, it is assumed that you are using your left hand to hold a dish and use right hand to wash it.

Basic Techniques
Be aware the object that you are holding in your left hand, for example, a plate, a cup

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Also, be aware specific washing movements of your right hand. For example, left and right, up and down or circling.

Optional Technique 2
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: rainbow colors in soap bubbles; the speed of movements of your hands; sensations you experience in your hands such as pressure, slipperiness, and temperature; different sensations in left hand and right hand; changing of sensation while washing, rinsing and drying; sound of running water; temperature of the water; fragrance of soap; your motivation for washing hands; your body posture; awareness of washing dishes; your breath; and feelings or thoughts.

See Also
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Touch

109. Mindfulness of Loading Dishwasher

You can use this technique while loading dishes into a dishwasher. Equally you can also this technique while unloading dishes from a dishwasher.

Basic Technique
Be aware of your hand movements with Mindfulness of Hand Movement techniques.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your upper body movements with the techniques describe in Mindfulness of Upper Body Movements.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: a thought, a feeling, your body posture, your breath or other experiences.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Standing

110. Mindfulness of Unloading Dishwasher

You can use this technique while unloading dishes from a dishwasher. Equally you can also this technique while loading dishes into a dishwasher.

Basic Technique
Recognize the object that you are unloading while unloading, for example, a plate, a cup, a pot.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of weights of each item, which you are unloading, for example, heavy, light, or moderate.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of greater pressure in your fingers while holding and lifting a heavier than a lighter item. (For example, you may notice a greater pressure in your fingers while unloading a pot than a cupt.)

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: pressure in your feet,your body posture, your breath, awareness of unloading, or other experiences.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Touch

111. Mindfulness of Washing a Car

The following techniques can be used while hand washing the exterior of a car. Tip: wash your car leisurely.

Basic Techniques
Label the car part that you are washing.

For example, label 'window' when you are washing a window of the car. Label 'tire' when you are washing the tire.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Do the entire practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

Optional Technique 2
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: thoughts, feelings, your body posture, pressure points, hands movements, your breath or other experiences.

See Also
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

112. Mindfulness of Google Searching

Basic Techniques
Be aware of pressing the search button while pressing the button.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your motivation for search; your intention to press the search (or the enter) button; sensations in your finger tips while entering keywords and pressing keyboards; movements of your finger and hands; cursor blinking and cursor movement in the input field; sound of typing and button pressing; search result when it appears; scrolling screen while scrolling search result screen; body posture; and breath.

113. Mindfulness of Using a Computer

You can use the following techniques while you are using a computer.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of pressure in your finger tip when you are pressing a button on mouse or keyboard.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of clicking sound from the mouse or keyboard.

Optional Technique 2
Practice two of the above techniques at the same time.

114. Mindfulness of Using a Computer 2

You can apply the following techniques while you are using a computer.

Basic Techniques
Label 'pressing' when you are pressing a mouse button.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Label 'moving' when you are moving the mouse pointer on the computer screen.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Optional Technique 1
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

See Also
One Mindful Breath

103. Mindfulness of Using a Computer 3

Basic Technique
Label 'scrolling' when you are scrolling contents on the screen.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the task you are doing with computer. For example, when you are browsing a web site, you know that you are browsing a web site. When you are composing an email, know that you are composing an email. When you are saving a document, know that you are saving a document.

Advanced Technique 2
Take one mindful breath if you are waiting for something. For example, for an application to start, a web page to be loaded or data to be saved onto a hard disk drive.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: tiredness or dryness in your eyes;
sounds of buttons, keys; joints that are bent; joints that are straight; awareness of using a computer; your thought; feeling; your body posture; and other mental or physical experiences.

115. Mindfulness Practice in a Bus, Train or Airplane.

Basic Technique
Mentally say:

- "Breathing in, motion."
- "Breathing out, vibration."

When you say 'breathing in' or 'out', you pay attention to your breath. When you say 'motion', be aware of motion, which you are experiencing while riding When you say 'vibration', be aware of vibration, which you are experiencing.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Mentally say:

- "Breathing in, sitting."
- "Breathing out, sight."

When you say 'breathing in' or 'out', you pay attention to your breath. When you say 'sitting', be aware that you are sitting. When you say 'sight', you pay attention to the scene, which you are seeing. Note: if you are standing instead of sitting, you can substitute 'sitting' with 'standing' in the above instruction.

Optional Technique 2
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Motion

See Also
Mindfulness of Sight while Moving
Mindfulness of Sitting

Mindfulness of Vibration
Mindful Breathing 3

116. Mindfulness of Waiting in a Line

You can use the following technique while you are waiting in a line, for example, in a store, a bank.

Basic Techniques

1. Softly gaze at an object, e.g. a wall, floor or shelf, that is not moving while waiting in a line. (maintain the gaze whenever possible during this practice)
2. Notice appearance of something in your sight. For example, when a customer is walking and passing nearby, be aware of something coming into your sight.
3. Notice disappearance of something in your sight. For example, when a customer is walking and passing away, be aware of something passing out of your sight.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware when you hear a new sound. Also be aware when the sound discontinues.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: the source of the sound, e.g. conversation, store announcement, music; your body posture; pressure points; your eyes; your breath; your thought; and your feeling.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Sight With a Gaze
See Also
Mindfulness of Standing
Mindfulness of Sounds

117. Mindfulness of Waiting in a Line and Breathing

Basic Technique

Mentally say:

1. "Breathing in, I am standing."
2. "Breathing out, I am waiting."

Note: if you are waiting while sitting, you can substitute 'standing' in the above step 2 with 'sitting'.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

Add step 3: Mentally say:

- "Breathing in, I am aware of my feeling."
- "Breathing out, I am aware of my feeling."

Advanced Technique 1

Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites

Mindful Breathing 3

Mindfulness of Waiting in a Line

118. Mindfulness of Waiting in a Line 2

This a practice of Mindfulness of Six Sense-Consciousness in a waiting situation.

Basic Techniques

Label your present moment awareness with a set of six labels: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, perceiving.

For example,

- label 'hearing' when you hear a sound
- label 'perceiving' when you are aware of a thought
- label 'touching' when you notice pressure in your foot.
- label what you see or hear as 'sight' a staff.
- label 'touching' when you notice cool breeze in your face.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Six Sense-Consciousness

119. Mindfulness of Listening to Speaking

You can use this technique while listening to speaking from others.

Basic Technique
Be aware that you are listening.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of reactions to the speaking in your body while listening.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of reactions to the speaking in your mind while listening.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the speaking and your breath at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware that words or phrases are being interpreted or perceived as meanings or concepts.

120. Mindfulness of Speaking

You can use this technique while speaking to others. During your speaking, you briefly pose for an inhalation. This practice utilizes the brief moment (with Half Mindful Breath). This technique is also suitable while speaking on the phone.

Basic Technique
Be aware of inhalation.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique
Notice whether your inhalation is short or long.

Prerequisites
Half Mindful Breath

121. Mindfulness of Speaking 2

You can use this technique while speaking to others. This technique is also suitable while speaking on the phone.

Basic Technique
Be aware of vibration felt in vocal cords (vocal folds), which is located front side of your neck while speaking.

122. Mindfulness of Speaking 3

Basic Technique
Be aware of your own speech.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of reactions in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of reactions in your mind.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of your breath

123. Mindfulness of Speaking 4

Basic Technique

Be aware of facial or verbal reactions from the listener.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of tension in your body if there is any.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of feelings whether it is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of mental contents in your mind.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of your intention to speak.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of your motivation of speaking.

Optional Technique
Expand your awareness to your breath.

124. Mindfulness of Encountering a Person

With this technique you can be aware of your reaction when you encounter a person.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of any reaction that occurs in your body, for example, tension, discomfort, tightness, relaxation, comfort.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Techniques 1
Be aware of feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Advanced Techniques 2
Be aware of arising of a thought, perception or memory about the person, for example, a judgment, an opinion.

Advanced Techniques 2
Be aware of any other reaction that occurs in your mind. (In other words, arising mental contents)

Advanced Technique 3
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: arising of attraction or aversion.

125. Mindfulness of Eye Contact

With this technique you can be aware of your reaction when you have an eye contact with a person.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of any reaction that occurs in your body, for example, tension, discomfort, tightness, relaxation, comfort.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Techniques 1
Be aware of feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Advanced Techniques 2
Be aware of any reaction that occurs in your mind. (In other words, arising mental contents)

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Body Tension

126. Mindfulness of Eye Contact: part 2

Advanced Techniques 2
Be aware if either attraction or aversion arises in your mind.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of any other mental contents that may arise in your mind as result of the eye contact.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of your eyes.

Optional Technique 2
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: makeup or absence of makeup.

See Also
Mindfulness of Attraction
Mindfulness of Aversion

127. Mindfulness of a Phone Ring

You can practice this technique when your phone rings.

Basic Technique

1. Hear the phone ringing sound.
2. Take One Mindful Breath.
3. Pick up the phone.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: the phone ringing sound; an intention to answer the phone; curiosity about the caller if it arises; your action of answering the phone; and other reactions or experiences in your mind and body.

Prerequisites

One Mindful Breath

128. Mindfulness of Watching a TV Program

Basic Technique
Notice reaction in your body while watching a TV (television) program.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of feelings whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Advanced Technique 2
Notice other reactions in your mind while watching a TV program.

Advanced Technique 3
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: sounds and your breath.

See Also
Mindfulness of Feelings
Mindfulness of Mental Activities

129. Mindfulness of Watching a TV Program 2

Basic Technique
Label 'changed' when a scene on TV (television) is changed. For example, a screen on TV is changed from a street view to an ocean scene.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to the basic practice, follow the TV screen as if you were a camera man of the TV program you are watching. Label 'zoom', 'left', 'right', 'forward', backward' as the TV screen camera moves or change its focuses.

Optional Technique 2
In the above steps, practice with awareness alone without using labels.

130. Mindfulness of Watching a Figure Skating

You can practice this technique while you are watching a figure skating program on TV.

Basic Technique
Label what you see while watching the TV program, for example, if you are watching a figure skating, you could mentally say a word like: turn, spin, jump, spiral, step, lift.

For example, label 'turn' when the skater turns.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware your physical reaction with some words, for example, relaxation, stiffness.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of your mental reaction with some words while watching the TV program, for example, thought, feeling.

Advanced Technique 3
In the above steps, practice with awareness alone without using labels.

Note
Using a few labels is easier to perform exercise than many labels and is usually sufficient to keep your mindfulness awake. However if you prefer to use more specific labels, that is OK too. For example, beautiful, dramatic, charming, sad, happy, funny, excited, surprise, worried, sweat, laughter, tired, muscle tightening, relaxing. If you prefer, you could prepare some labels in advance before watching a particular TV program.

131. Mindfulness of Watching a Football Game (soccer game)

You can try the following technique while watching a football game (soccer game) on TV.

Basic Technique
Label what you see on TV screen with either action or non-action.

For example, when a player is kicking a ball, just label 'action'. When you see players paused playing or you see fans on TV screen, just label 'non-action'.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of physical reaction that occurs in your body while watching the game such as tenses, relaxed.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of feelings while watching the game whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

132. Mindfulness of Watching a Football Game (soccer game): part 2

Advanced Technique 3
Be Aware of emotion that occurs while you are watching the game, such as thrill, suspense, boredom, anger, humiliation and resentment, joy, despair.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of other mental contents that are occurring while watching the game.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice Basic Technique with awareness alone without using any labels.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your heartbeats whether rapid or normal and your breath.

Tips
Using a few labels is easier to perform exercise than many labels and is usually sufficient to keep your mindfulness awake. However if you prefer to use more specific labels, that is OK too, for example, kicking, running, heading, goalkeeping, tackling, passing, receiving, dribbling, falling, cheering. If you prefer, you could prepare your favorite labels in advance before watching a game.

133. Mindfulness of How Are You

When someone greet you or ask you "how are you?", You can practice the following technique instead of reacting automatically.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the feeling in your body (whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral).

After getting familiar with the basic practice, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique
Be aware of the feeling in your mind (whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral).

Note
When you notice your feeling, it should be the feeling in the present moment, not the past.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Feelings

Chapter 6: Unpleasantness

You can make a good use of unpleasantness by being mindful.

134. Mindfulness of Itchiness

Normally itching sensation arises and disappears within a minute. It provides a unique opportunity to practice mindfulness. You can try the following practice while you have unpleasant feeling on your skin that makes you want to scratch.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the specific itching sensations, for example, tickling, tingling or burning.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the specific area where you experience the itch sensations.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the itching sensation.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the itching sensation.

135. Mindfulness of Itchiness: part 2

Optional Technique 4
Be aware of the intensity of the itching sensation whether it is strong or weak.

Optional Technique 5
Be aware whether the intensity of the sensation is increasing, decreasing or unchanging.

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware of reaction in your body to the itchiness, for instance, tightened muscles, tension or shallow breath.

Advanced Technique 7
Be aware of unpleasantness (a feeling).

Advanced Technique 8
Be aware of wanting to avoid the unpleasantness. For example, wanting relief the itchiness by scratching.

Advanced Technique 9
Be aware of the arising of the desire.

Advanced Technique 10
Be aware of the passing of the desire.

Advanced Technique 11
Be aware whether the desire is strong or not strong.

136. Mindfulness of Itchiness: part 3

Advanced Technique 12
Be aware of reaction in your mind to the itchiness, for instance, fear, anger, worry, sadness, agitation or calmness.

Advanced Technique 13
Be aware that the physical sensation of itchiness is being interpreted or perceived as unpleasantness.

Advanced Technique 14
Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 15
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

137. Mindfulness of Itchiness and Breathing

Basic Technique
Mentally say:

1. "Breathing in, I am aware of itchiness."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of itchiness."

Note
You can abbreviate the step 1. For example, "Breathing in, itchiness." When you say 'breathing in', you pay attention to your focus point. When you say 'itchiness', you pay attention to the itchiness sensation, which you are experiencing.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites
Mindful Breathing 3
Mindfulness of Itchiness

138. Mindfulness of Numbness

You can practice this technique when you experience numbness in your body.

This technique (Mindfulness of Numbness) is the identical to Mindfulness of Itchiness except the a few. Hence, you can practice this technique by using the Mindfulness of Itchiness instruction with the following modifications:

- substitute the words 'itchiness' with 'numbness' .
- substitute 'itchiness sensations' with the hunger sensations, for example, tingling, pain, pressure or loss of sensation.

See Mindfulness of Itchiness for the instruction.

139. Mindfulness of Hunger

The feeling of hunger provides a unique opportunity for a mindfulness practice. You can practice a few minute when you feel hungry, for example, before breakfast, lunch or dinner.

This technique (Mindfulness of Hunger) is the identical to Mindfulness of Itchiness except the a few. Hence, you can practice this technique by using the Mindfulness of Itchiness instruction with the following modifications:

- substitute the words 'itchiness' with 'hunger'.
- substitute 'itchiness sensations' with the hunger sensations, for example, warm, burning, pain, contracting and pang.

See Mindfulness of Itchiness and Mindfulness for the instruction.

140. Mindfulness of Pain

You can practice the following technique when you feel minor pain.

This technique (Mindfulness of Pain) is the identical to Mindfulness of Itchiness except the a few. Hence, you can practice this technique by using the Mindfulness of Itchiness instruction with the following modifications:

- substitute the words 'itchiness' with 'pain'.
- substitute 'itchiness sensations' with the pain sensations, for example, sharp, deep, pinching, tingling, throbbing, pulsing, aching, fleeting, burning, piercing, prickling

See Mindfulness of Itchiness for the instruction.

Note: This technique may not necessarily reduce the pain. The goal of this technique is to practice mindfulness.

141. Mindfulness of Leg Numbness

You can practice this practice while you experience leg numbness, e.g., due to prolonged sitting. This practice does not necessarily relief numbness in your leg(s). Relieving numbness is not the goal of this practice.

Basic Technique
Be aware of unpleasant feeling due to the numbness in your leg(s).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of wanting to avoid or relief the numbness.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of specific numbness sensations, for example, tingling, pain, pressure or loss of sensation.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of specific areas in your body where you are experiencing the numbness sensations.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware ofthat you mind is interpreting the numbness physical sensation as unpleasant.

Advanced Technique 4
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: the arising of the desire, the passing of the desire, whether the wanting is strong or not strong.

See Also
Mindfulness of Numbness

142. Mindfulness of Leg Numbness and Breathing

1. Mentally say: "Breathing in, I am aware of numbness. Breathing out, I am aware of numbness."
2. Repeat the step 1 for a few times.
3. Adjust your sitting position to relieve leg numbness.
4. Mentally say: "Breathing in, relieving the numbness. Breathing out, relieving the numbness."
5. Repeat the step 4 until the numbness in your legs fades.

Advanced Technique
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing
Mindfulness of Leg Numbness

143. Mindfulness of Urge

In a situation when you feel an urge, you can practice this technique instead of reacting to the urge. For example, the situation may include when you have an urge to scratch the area of your skin where you feel itchy or you may have an urge to eat, drink or use the Internet. For another example, when you feel an urge to do something, such as planning for tomorrow while you are paying attention to your breath (in Mindfulness of Breathing practice).

Basic Technique
Be aware of an urge.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of a bodily reaction to the urge, for instance, shallow breathing, restlessness, discomfort, tension, agitation or excitement in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the bodily reaction.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the bodily reaction.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of the intensity of the bodily reaction whether it is strong or weak.

Advanced Technique 4
Identify the areas of your body where the bodily reaction occurred.

Advanced Technique 5

Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

144. Mindfulness of Urge 2

When you feel an urge, you can practice this technique instead of reacting to the urge.

Basic Technique
Be aware of unpleasant feeling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of strong desire to act.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the desire.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the desire.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware whether the desire is strong or not strong.

Advanced Technique 4
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also
Mindfulness of Urge

145. Mindfulness of Boredom and Breathing

You can use the following technique when you have boredom.

Basic Technique

Mentally say:
1. "Breathing in, I am aware of my boredom."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of my boredom."

Note
You can abbreviate the step 1. For example, "Breathing in, boredom." When you say "breathing in", you pay attention to your breath. When you say "boredom", you pay attention to your boredom.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites
Mindful Breathing 3

146. Mindfulness of Boredom and Breathing 2

1. "Breathing in, I am aware of an unpleasant feeling based on my boredom."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of an unpleasant feeling based on my boredom."
3. Repeat above a few times.
4. "Breathing in, I embrace the unpleasant feeling."
5. "Breathing out, I embrace the unpleasant feeling."
6. Repeat above until the unpleasant feeling starts to calm.
7. "Breathing in, I calm the unpleasant feeling."
8. "Breathing out, I calm the unpleasant feeling."

Prerequisites
Mindful Breathing 5

147. Mindfulness of Impulse

When you have a sudden strong urge, you can practice Mindfulness of Impulse.

Mindfulness of Impulse is the same as Mindfulness of Boredom except that you simply substitute the word 'boredom' with 'impulse' in the Mindfulness of Boredom technique.

148. Mindfulness of Impulse and Breathing

You can use the following technique when you have an impulse (a sudden urge).

Basic Technique
Mentally say:
1. "Breathing in, I am aware of an impulse in me."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of an impulse in me."

Alternatively you could abbreviate the above phrases: "Breathing in, an impulse. Breathing out, an impulse." When you say 'breathing in', you pay attention to your breath. When you say 'impulse', you pay attention to the impulse in you.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
As you practice the above steps, the impulse may start to be weakened, then proceed with the following practice: Mentally say: "Breathing in, observe the disappearance of the impulse. Breathing out, I observe the disappearance of the impulse."

Alternatively could abbreviate the above phrases: "Breathing in, disappearance of the impulse. Breathing out, disappearance of the impulse."

149. Mindfulness of Procrastination

You can do this practice when you realize you have to do a certain task that you have been procrastinating, for example, paying a bill, filing taxes or a chore. Also, you can practice this technique when you are seeking a distraction in order to forget or postpone the task.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the procrastinated task.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of a bodily reaction to the procrastinated task, for instance, shallow breathing, restlessness, discomfort, tension, agitation or excitement in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the bodily reaction.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the bodily reaction.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of the intensity of the bodily reaction whether it is strong or weak.

Advanced Technique 4
Identify the areas of your body where the bodily reaction occurred.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

150. Mindfulness of Procrastination 2

You can do this practice when you realize you have to do a certain task that you have been procrastinating, for example, paying a bill, filing taxes or a chore. Also, you can practice this technique when you are seeking a distraction in order to forget or postpone the task.

Basic Technique
Be aware of unpleasant feeling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of desire to forget the task or want to avoid doing the task.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the desire.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the desire.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware whether the desire is strong or not strong.

Advanced Technique 4
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also
Mindfulness of Procrastination

151. Mindfulness of Uncontrollable Situation

You can practice this technique when you encounter a situation that you want to control but have no control over it, for example, stuck in a traffic while being late for an appointment, illness, thought or behavior of another person that annoys you.

Basic Technique
Be aware of an uncontrollability.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of a bodily reaction to the no control situation, for instance, shallow breathing, restlessness, discomfort, tension, agitation or excitement in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the bodily reaction.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the bodily reaction.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of the intensity of the bodily reaction whether it is strong or weak.

Advanced Technique 4
Identify the areas of your body where the bodily reaction occurred.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

Note

If you don't have uncontrollable situation, you could recall a memory of uncontrollable situation that you encountered in the past for the sake of the practice.

152. Mindfulness of Uncontrollable Situation 2

You can practice this technique when you encounter a situation that you want to control but have no control over it.

Basic Technique
Be aware of unpleasant feeling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of desire to avoid the unpleasant feeling or desire to control the situation.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the desire.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the desire.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware whether the desire is strong or not strong.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of your mind whether it is calm or agitated.

Advanced Technique 5
Notice other mental contents that may arise, for example, frustration or thought.

Advanced Technique 6
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 8

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also

Mindfulness of Uncontrollable Situation

153. Mindfulness of Disappointment

You can practice this technique when have a disappointment.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the disappointment.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of a bodily reaction to the disappointment, for instance, shallow breathing, restlessness, discomfort, tension, agitation or excitement in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the bodily reaction.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the bodily reaction.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of the intensity of the bodily reaction whether it is strong or weak.

Advanced Technique 4
Identify the areas of your body where the bodily reaction occurred.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

Note

If you don't have disappointment, you could recall a memory of disappointment that you encountered in the past for the sake of the practice.

154. Mindfulness of Disappointment 2

You can practice this technique when have a disappointment.

Basic Technique
Be aware of unpleasant feeling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of desire to avoid the unpleasant feeling or desire to satisfy an unfulfilled expectation, hope or wish.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the desire.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the desire.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware whether the desire is strong or not strong.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of your mind whether it is calm or agitated.

Advanced Technique 5
Notice other mental contents that may arise, for example, dissatisfaction or thought.

Advanced Technique 6
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 8

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also

Mindfulness of Disappointment

155. Mindfulness of Bodily Reactions to Tension

With this technique, you can be aware of body reaction to tension.

Basic Technique
Notice physical sensations of tension, tightness or discomfort in your body.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Identify the area where you feel the most tension or discomfort, for example, shoulders, neck, hands, stomach.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the physical sensation.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the physical sensation.

Advanced Technique 4
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 5
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also
Mindfulness of Muscle Contraction

156. Mindfulness of Mental Reactions to Tension

With this technique, you can be aware of mental reaction to tension.

Basic Technique

Notice unpleasant feeling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Be aware of wanting to avoid or get rid of the unpleasant feeling.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of the arising of the wanting

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the passing of the wanting

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware whether the wanting is strong or not strong.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of your mind whether it is calm or agitated.

Advanced Technique 6
Notice other mental contents that may arise. For example, thought, anger, fear, sadness, joy, affection.

Advanced Technique 7
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time. (Alternatively practice any two or more of the above techniques at the same time.)

Advanced Technique 8

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

157. Mindfulness of Anger

You can practice the following technique when you have anger.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the anger.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice **Mindfulness of Bodily Reactions to Tension** to be aware of the reactions in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice **Mindfulness of Mental Reactions to Tension** to be aware of the reactions in your mind.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the arising of the anger when the anger begins to arise.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of the passing of the anger when the anger begins to pass.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of source of your anger, for instance, person, relationship and job.

Advanced Technique 6
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time. (Alternatively practice any two or more of the above techniques at the same time.)

Advanced Technique 8
your awareness unlike the above techniques in which you have limited your awareness to one or few specific experiences.

Note

If you don't have anger, you can recall a memory (or thought) that can evoke anger for the sake of the practice.

158. Mindfulness of Wanting (Desire)

You can practice the following technique when you have wanting (or desire).

Basic Technique
Be aware of wanting if wanting is in your mind. Otherwise be aware of absence of wanting.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice **Mindfulness of Bodily Reactions to Tension** to be aware of the reactions in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice **Mindfulness of Mental Reactions to Tension** to be aware of the reactions in your mind.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of the arising of the desire when the desire begins to arise.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of the passing of the desire when the desire begins to pass.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of source of your desire, for example, food, goal, respect, affection, goods and promotion.

Advanced Technique 6
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

your awareness unlike the above techniques in which you have limited your awareness to one or few specific experiences.

Note

If you don't have desire, you can recall a memory (or thought) that can evoke desire for the sake of the practice. For example, you imagine your favorite food while you are hungry. Alternatively, you can evoke desire by taking a certain action. For example, you look at your favorite food while you are hungry or you look at a good that you want to possess.

153. Mindfulness of Fear

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'fear' in the Mindfulness of Anger technique.

Note
If you do not have fear in the present moment, you could recall a memory (or situation) that will make you feel anxious for the sake of the practice.

In an advanced technique, you may label 'remembering' while remembering the situation.

159. Mindfulness of Anxiety

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger (or Mindfulness of Desire) except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'anxiety' in the Mindfulness of Anger technique.

Note
If you do not have anxiety in the present moment, you can recall a memory (or situation) that will make you feel anxious for the sake of the practice.

In an advanced technique, you may label 'remembering' while remembering the situation.

160. Mindfulness of Worry

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger (or Mindfulness of Desire) except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'worries' in the Mindfulness of Anger technique.

161. Mindfulness of Hatred

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger (or Mindfulness of Desire) except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'hatred' in the Mindfulness of Anger technique.

162. Mindfulness of Grief

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger (or Mindfulness of Desire) except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'grief' in the Mindfulness of Anger technique.

Note

If you do not have grief in the present moment, you can recall a memory (or situation) that will make you feel grief in order to practice.

In an advanced technique, you may label 'remembering' while remembering the situation.

163. Mindfulness of Stress

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger (or Mindfulness of Desire) except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'stress' in the Mindfulness of Anger technique.

Note

If you do not have stress in the present moment, you can recall a stressful memory (or situation), in which you experienced (much) stress.

In an advanced technique, you may label 'remembering' while remembering the situation.

164. Mindfulness of Regret

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger (or Mindfulness of Desire) except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'regret' in the Mindfulness of Anger technique.

Note

If you do not have regret in the present moment, you can recall a memory (or situation) that will make you feel regret in order to practice the above technique.

In an advanced technique, you may label 'remembering' while remembering the situation.

165. Mindfulness of Anger 2

You can use the following technique when you have anger.

Basic Technique
Mentally say:

1. "Breathing in, I am aware of my anger."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of my anger."

   Repeat above a few times.

3. "Breathing in, I embrace my anger.
4. "Breathing in, I embrace my anger.

   Repeat above until your anger starts to calm.

5. "Breathing out, I calm my anger."
6. "Breathing out, I calm my anger."

Note
You can abbreviate the step 1. For example, "Breathing in, anger." When you say 'breathing in', you pay attention to your in breath. When you say ' anger', you pay attention to your anger. Likewise you can also reduce other sentences in other steps.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique
Do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Prerequisites
Mindful Breathing 5

166. Mindfulness of Hatred 2

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger 2 except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'hatred' in the Mindfulness of Anger 2 technique.

167. Mindfulness of Wanting 2

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger 2 except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'desire' in the Mindfulness of Anger 2 technique.

168. Mindfulness of Anxiety 2

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger 2 except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'anxiety' in the Mindfulness of Anger 2 technique.

169. Mindfulness of Worry 2

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger 2 except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'worries' in the Mindfulness of Anger 2 technique.

170. Mindfulness of Grief 2

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger 2 except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'grief' in the Mindfulness of Anger 2 technique.

171. Mindfulness of Stress 2

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger 2 except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'stress' in the Mindfulness of Anger 2 technique.

172. Mindfulness of Regret 2

This technique is the same as Mindfulness of Anger 2 except that you simply substitute the word 'anger' with 'regret' in the Mindfulness of Anger 2 technique.

173. Mindfulness of Worry 3

Mentally say:

1. "Breathing in, I am aware of an unpleasant feeling based on my worry."
2. "Breathing out, I am aware of an unpleasant feeling based on my worry."
   Repeat above a few times.

3. "Breathing in, I embrace the unpleasant feeling."
4. "Breathing out, I embrace the unpleasant feeling."
   Repeat above until the unpleasant feeling starts to calm.

5. "Breathing in, I calm the unpleasant feeling."
6. "Breathing out, I calm the unpleasant feeling."

Prerequisites
Mindful Breathing 5

174. Preparing for Worry

Basic Technique

1. Recall a worrying situation, which you experienced in the past.
2. Notice how you reacted in the situation.
3. Identify shortcomings of your reaction.
4. Plan how you would respond in the same or similar situation in the future.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique

In the above step 1, be aware that you are remembering. In the above step 4, be aware that you are planning.

175. Preparing for Anger

Basic Technique

1. Recall a situation or bring back a past memory in which someone who is close to you was very angry.
2. Observe irrationality and ugliness of anger. For example, the person may be yelling, or doing other things that the person will later regret.
3. Recall a situation when you were very angry.
4. Compare irrationality and ugliness of anger in your situation and in the situation, which you recalled in the above step 2.
5. Tell yourself that you will never let anger takes you over.
6. Focus your mind single-pointedly on the determination for a few minutes.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique

In the above step 2, be aware that you are visualizing (or recalling the past memory). In the above step 6, be aware that you are planning.

176. Preparing for a Stressful Situation

Basic Technique

1. Recall a stressful situation, which you experienced in the past.
2. Notice how you reacted in the situation.
3. Identify shortcomings of your reaction.
4. Plan how you would respond in the same or similar situation in the future.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique

In the above step 1, be aware that you are remembering. In the above step 4, be aware that you are planning.

See Also

Mindfulness of Stress

177. Preparing for Anxiety

Basic Technique

1. Recall an anxious situation, which you experienced in the past.
2. Notice how you reacted in the situation.
3. Identify shortcomings of your reaction.
4. Plan how you would respond in the same or similar situation in the future.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique

In the above step 1, be aware that you are remembering. In the above step 4, be aware that you are planning.

See Also

Mindfulness of Anxiety

178. Mindfulness of Unkindness Reactions

You can use this technique when someone is treating you unkindly in the present moment.

- Practice **Mindfulness of Bodily Reactions to Tension** to be aware of the reactions in your body.
- Practice **Mindfulness of Mental Reactions to Tension** to be aware of the reactions in your mind.

Note
If someone is not treating you unkindly in the present moment, you can recall a memory (or situation), in which other people was treating you unkindly, for the sake of the practice.

In an advanced technique, you may label 'remembering' while remembering the situation.

Prerequisites
- Mindfulness of Bodily Reactions to Tension
- Mindfulness of Mental Reactions to Tension

Chapter 7: Rushing

You may encounter an occasion where you can not slow down or can not avoid rushing. Still, rushing with mindfulness is better than rushing with mindlessness.

179. Mindfulness of Rushing

You can practice the following technique when you are rushing to do something.

Basic Technique
Be aware that you are rushing.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of tension, discomfort or tightness in your body.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of the goal that you are trying to accomplish.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

180. Mindfulness of Multitasking

You can practice the following technique when you are doing more than one task at the same time.

Basic Technique
Be aware that you are multitasking.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of the kind of tasks you are doing, for example, eating and watching TV.

181. Mindfulness of Hurried Eating

Basic Technique
Be aware of your lifting food movements of your hand with labels:

1. Label 'up' when your hand moves toward up direction.
2. Label 'down' when your hand moves toward down direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your rapid jaw movements.

See Also
For Eating (in Practice Tips)

182.2 Mindfulness of Hurried Eating

Basic Technique
Be aware that you are rushing. For example, you are lifting food fast, chewing fast, and swallowing quickly.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of tension, discomfort or tightness in your body.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of another task if you are doing something else while eating.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

See Also
For Eating (in Practice Tips)

Chapter 8: Other Occasions

183. Mindfulness of Watching a Firework

The following technique is easy to practice when one or few fireballs are visible in the sky. If you experience a difficulty to practice this technique, try Mindfulness of Watching a Firework 2 instead.

Basic Technique

1. Label 'begin' when you see a fireball is created in the sky.
2. Label 'end' when the fireball disappears in the sky.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Do the practice with awareness alone without using any labels.

184. Mindfulness of Watching a Firework 2

Basic Techniques
Identify the dominant color in the fireworks.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of whether the dominant color is changing rapidly or slowly.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: sounds of fireworks, notice the gab between the sound and fireball formation, awareness of wathcing a firework, your breath, heartbeats whether they are rapid or normal, other reaction in your body and mind.

185. Mindfulness of the Two Hands Holding up Movement

You can use the following techniques while practicing the Two Hands Holding Up, which is one of the eight movements of Baduanjin qigong (Eight Section Brocade). The Two Hands Holding Up consists of upward and downward movements of two hands.

Basic Technique

- Be aware of up movements when your hands are moving upward.
- Be aware of down movements when your hands are moving downward.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Move your hands up slowly while inhaling. Move your hands down while exhaling.

Note: You should breathe naturally without withholding or forcing it. Let the speed of your breath determine the speed of the movements, but not the other way. This is to synchronize hand movements with your breath.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of both movements and your breath clearly at the same time.

See Also
Mindfulness of Hand Movements 2
Mindfulness of Breathing
The Eight Mindful Breathing
Mindfulness of Qigong

186. Mindfulness of the Two Hands Holding up Movement – labeling

This is a labeling version of Mindfulness of the Two Hands Holding up Movement. In other words, this technique is the same as Mindfulness of the Two Hands Holding up Movement except that this technique uses labels.

Basic Technique

1. Silent say 'up' when your hands are moving upward.
2. Silent say 'down' when your hands are moving downward.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

Move your hands up slowly while inhaling. Move your hands down while exhaling.

Note: You should breathe naturally without withholding or forcing it. Let the speed of your breath determine the speed of the movements, but not the other way. This is to synchronize hand movements with your breath.

Advanced Technique 2

Silent say, "breathing in, up. Breathing out, down" while doing the qigong exercise.

Note: When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your focus point. When you say "up" or "down", pay attention to your hands movement. These phrases are used to aid awareness of your breath and hands movements but not to dictate your breath nor hand movements.

Advanced Technique 3

Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases or labels.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of both movements and breath at the same time.

Prerequisites
The Eight Mindful Breathing

See Also
Mindfulness of Qigong
Mindfulness of Hand Movements 2
Mindfulness of Breathing
Mindfulness of the Two Hands Holding up Movement

187. Mindfulness of Qigong

This technique can be used while practicing qigong.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of your hand movements.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your foot movements.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of your upper body movements with Mindfulness of Upper Body Movements techniques.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice Advanced Technique 1 and Advanced Technique 2 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time except the Basic Technique.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Foot Movements
Mindfulness of Upper Body Movements

See Also
Mindfulness of the Two Hands Holding up Movement

188. Mindfulness of Tai Chi

This technique can be used while practicing tai chi or qigong.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of your hand movements.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your foot movements.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware pressure points.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware shifting pressure points.

Advanced Technique 4
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 5
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

See Also
How to Monitor Your Heartbeats
Mindfulness of Joint Angle
Mindfulness of Standing
Mindfulness of Walking

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Foot Movements
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

189. Mindfulness of Tai Chi 2

This technique can be used while practicing tai chi or qigong.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the specific body part that you are moving. For example, when you are moving your left arm, be aware of your left arm.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your breath.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of sensation in your body while practicing tai chi.

Optional Technique
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: the speed of movements; changing of sensation in your body; pressure points; joints that are bent; sight change; body posture; and feelings or thoughts.

See Also
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Joint Angle

190. Mindfulness of Tai Chi 3

This technique can be used while practicing Tai Chi, Kung Fu or similar martial art.

Basic Techniques
Label 'forward' when your hand or foot moves forward direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Label 'backward' when your hand or foot moves backward direction.

Advanced Technique 2
Label 'left' when your hand or foot moves left direction.

Advanced Technique 3
Label 'right' when your hand or foot moves right direction.

Advanced Technique 4
Label 'up' when your hand or foot moves up direction.

Advanced Technique 5
Label 'down' when your hand or foot moves down direction.

Advanced Technique 6
Practice with awareness alone without using labels.

Advanced Technique 7
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 8
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Technique

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your breath, pressure points, pulses in the pressure points, body posture, sight, your feeling, your thought, and other experiences.

See Also
How to Monitor Your Heartbeats
Mindfulness of Joint Angle
Mindfulness of Standing
Mindfulness of Walking

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Foot Movements
Mindfulness of Hand Movements

191. Mindfulness of Yoga

This technique can be used while practicing yoga or static qigong practice.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of muscles stretching sensation if your muscles being stretched. Otherwise, be aware of absence of muscles stretching sensation.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of muscles contraction sensation if there is muscles contracted. Otherwise, just be aware of absence of muscles contraction.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of muscle area that are being stretched.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware of muscle area that are being contracted.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Muscle Contraction
Mindfulness of Muscle Stretching

See Also
Mindfulness of Foot Movements
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Joint Angle
How to Monitor Your Heartbeats
Mindfulness of Sitting

192. Mindfulness of Yoga: part 2

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware pressure points.

Optional Technique 3
Be aware of joints that are bent.

Optional Technique 4
Be aware of joints that are straight.

Advanced Technique 4
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 5
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Technique 3
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your breath, pulses in the pressure points, movements of hands, feet, head, body posture, sight, your feeling, your thought, and other experiences.

193. Mindfulness of Yoga and Breathing

This technique can be used while practicing yoga or static qigong practice.

Basic Techniques
Silently say "breathing in, my body. Breathing out, my body"

Note: When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your breath. When you say "my body", pay attention to your body, especially, pressure points, muscle being stretched or contracted.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

194. Mindfulness of Running

Basic Technique
Notice pressure in your foot when your foot touches the ground.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware the pressure point is shifting from one foot to the other while walking.

Optional Technique 1
Notice texture or condition of the ground such as soft, hard, even, uneven, slippery, uphill, downhill, and so on.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware if the texture or condition of the ground changes.

See Also
Mindfulness of Sight While Moving
Mindfulness of Touch

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Standing

195. Mindfulness of Running 2

Basic Techniques
Label 'forward' when your foot moves forward direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of your hand movements. However, if there is no hand movement, just be aware of stillness of your hands.

Optional Technique 1
Notice texture or condition of the ground such as soft, hard, even, uneven, slippery, uphill, downhill, and so on.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware if the texture or condition of the ground changes.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Technique 3
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your breath, movements of your hands, sensations of breathing, winds, sensation in your leg muscles, pressure points, pulses, sight, sounds of breath, birds, traffics, awareness of running, thoughts and feelings, and other experiences.

See Also
Mindfulness of Foot Movements

Mindfulness of Hand Movements
How to Monitor Your Heartbeats
Mindfulness of Touch

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Standing

196. Mindfulness of Weight Lifting

Basic Technique
Be aware of your hand movements.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Techniques 1
Be aware of voluntary muscle contraction.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of weights in your hands.

Optional Techniques 2
Be aware of muscle areas (groups) for which you are training. For example, be aware of arms or biceps while you are doing biceps curls. Likewise if you are training your shoulder muscles, pay attention on shoulders or shoulder muscle group.

Optional Techniques 3
Be aware of pressure in your pressure points such as feet while standing or your back while lying down on a bench.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Techniques 4
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your breath, your body posture, noise in the gym, thoughts or feelings arising while lifting a weight, other physical and mental experiences.

See Also
Mindfulness of Feelings

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Hand Movements
Mindfulness of Muscle Contraction
Mindfulness of Sitting

197. Mindfulness of Gratitude to People

1. Choose a person (or people) who you are grateful for.
2. Recognize specific kindness or benefits the person (or people) provided to you
3. Notice feeling of gratitude towards the person (people).
4. Focus your mind single-pointedly on the feeling of gratitude that you are experiencing.

Tip: ***Are you having a difficulty finding gratitude toward strangers?***
Other people are essential for your survival. Other people provide food you eat, water you drink, house you live, medical services you depend, security that protects you, and entertainment you enjoy.

If there had been no other people, vital services and goods would not have been available to you. Even if services and goods are available, it will be terribly expensive without other people who share the cost of the manufacturing goods or providing services. For example, you would have to pay multi-billion dollars to get a cell phone, car or a computer if you do not share the cost. We can not survive without other people.

198. Mindfulness of Gratitude to Things

1. Choose something that you are grateful for, e.g. a house, life, eyes and a good health.
2. Recognize specific benefits that the thing provided to you.
3. Notice feeling of gratitude towards the thing.
4. Focus your mind single-pointedly on the feeling that you are experiencing.

199. Mindfulness of Gratitude to Other Drivers

You can practice the following techniques when you are walking pedestrian crossing (or driving through an intersection) while other cars are waiting.

1. Mentally say "I see other drivers are waiting for me."
2. Mentally say "I am grateful to other drives for waiting."

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 2
Synchronize each of the above steps with your breath.

Note
If you are not feeling grateful to other drivers, image a dangerous situation where the drivers continue to drive their cars without waiting for you.

200. Mindfulness of Gratitude Toward Eyes

Basic Technique

1. "I see something."
2. "I know I have eyes."
3. "I am grateful that I have eyes."

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

In the above step 1, substitute 'something' with specific object that you see, for example, a tree, sky, a bird.

Advanced Technique 1

Synchronize each of the above basic steps to correspond with your breath.

Note

if you are not feeling grateful to have eyes, image a scenario where you do not have eyes and can not see anything.

201. Mindfulness of Texting (Text messaging)

See Mindfulness of Using a Computer.

You can apply the above techniques while you are composing and sending a text message on a phone.

202. Mindfulness of Applauding

When you are applauding, be aware of pressure in your palms.
Basic Techniques
Be pressure in your palms while clapping.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of striking sounds while clapping your hands.

Optional Technique 2
Practice two of the above techniques at the same time.

Chapter 9: Places

203. Mindfulness in a Walmart Store

Basic Technique
Be aware of desire to possess if it arises when you look at a product in the store, for instance, a new model of a large screen TV.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of aversion if it arises when you look at a product in the store.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of your reaction in your body when you have an eye contact with another person in the store, for instance, tension or relaxation.

Advanced Technique 3
Notice appearance of an object in your sight while walking. For example, a bottle of shampoo has emerged in your sight.

Advanced Technique 4
Notice disappearance of an object in your sight while walking. For example, the bottle of shampoo has disappeared and is no longer visible in your sight.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of walking.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of your mind whether it is calm or agitated.

Advanced Technique 6

Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 7

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 8

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also

Mindfulness of Walking
Mindfulness of Attraction
Mindfulness of Aversion

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Sight while Moving
Mindfulness of Eye Contact

204. Mindfulness in a Starbucks Coffee Shop

You can practice this technique in a Starbucks or other coffee shop.

Basic Techniques
While lifting a cup, be aware of your hand movement with the following labels:

1. Label 'up' when your hand moves toward up direction.
2. Label 'down' when your hand moves toward down direction.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of people coming and passing around your table with Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze, which you could practice while looking at the drink or a person who is sitting in the same table.

Optional Techniques 1
Be aware of your conversation with the Mindfulness of Listening and Mindfulness of Speaking technique.

Optional Techniques 2
Be aware of your sounds in the coffee shop with the Mindfulness of Sounds technique.

Optional Techniques 3
Be aware of your sitting with the Mindfulness of Sitting technique.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also
Mindfulness of Sitting
Mindfulness of Sounds
Mindfulness of Eye Contact

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Eating
Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze
Mindfulness of Drinking a Cup of Tea 2

205. Mindfulness in a Restaurant

You can practice this technique in a restaurant.

Basic Techniques
Be aware of eating with the Mindfulness of Eating technique.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of people coming and passing around your table with Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze, which you could practice while looking at the food or a person who is sitting in the same table.

Optional Techniques 1
Be aware of your conversation with the Mindfulness of Listening and Mindfulness of Speaking technique.

Optional Techniques 2
Be aware of your sounds in the restaurant with the Mindfulness of Sounds technique.

Optional Technique 3
Be aware of hungry sensation in your stomach with the Mindfulness of Hunger technique. However if you do not have hungry sensation, be aware of the absence of hungry sensation.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

See Also
Mindfulness of Sitting
Mindfulness of Sounds
Mindfulness of Eye Contact
Mindfulness of Washing Hands
Mindfulness of Drying Hands
Mindfulness of Walking

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Eating
Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze

206. Mindfulness in a Shopping Mall

Basic Technique
Be aware of walking with the Mindfulness of Walking technique.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of other shoppers who are coming and passing in your sight with the Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze technique.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of sounds in the mall with the Mindfulness of Sounds technique.

Optional Technique 1
If you are waiting, be aware of waiting with the Mindfulness of Waiting in a Line technique.

Optional Technique 2
Practice Mindfulness of Eye Contact when you have an eye contact with another person in the mall.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of your mind whether it is calm or agitated.

Advanced Technique 4
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 5
Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Advanced Technique 6
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences).

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Walking
Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze
Mindfulness of Sounds

207. Mindfulness in a Dental Office

You can use this technique when you are under hygiene cleaning of your teeth. If the teeth cleaning has not started yet, pay attention to your breath while waiting on the dental chair.

Basic Technique
Be aware the vibration in your teeth when Cavitron touches your tooth or gum.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware the heat in your teeth when Cavitron touches your tooth or gum.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of pain. However there is no pain, be aware of the absence of the pain.

Advanced Technique 3
Be aware of unpleasant feeling.

Advanced Technique 4
Be aware of your desire to avoid the unpleasant experience.

Advanced Technique 5
Be aware of tension in your body. However there is no tension, be aware of the absence of the tension.

Advanced Technique 6
Be aware of your mind whether it is calm or agitated.

Advanced Technique 7
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 8
Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Technique 1
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your body reactions, sound (including sound of Cavitron, voice sound from the dentist and his or her assistant) your breath. (whether holding breath, short, long), anticipation of pain, awareness of getting hygiene cleaning of your teeth, and thoughts.

See Also
Mindfulness of Body Tension

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Touch
Mindfulness of Pain

208. Mindfulness in a Oil Change Service Shop

You can try the following technique in an express oil change service shop.

Basic Technique
Be aware of the sounds that are generated while mechanics are servicing your car in the service station with the Mindfulness Sounds. (Mindfulness of the Loudest Sound, Mindfulness of Non-continuous Sounds).

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Be aware of voice instruction or questions from the staff with Mindfulness of Listening. For example, they might ask information on your car or ask you to open the hood.

Advanced Technique 2
Be aware of sight with Mindfulness of Sight. For example, when you see a mechanic working on your car, be aware that you are looking at a mechanic. For another example, when you are looking at a new oil filter, be aware that you are looking at a new oil filter.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware of pressure points.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware of feeling whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Advanced Technique 3
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 4

Practice any two (or more) of the above techniques at the same time.

Optional Technique 3

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: thoughts, your breath, awareness of waiting for your car getting an oil change, and other physical and mental experiences.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Sounds
Mindfulness of Sight
Mindfulness of Sitting

Chapter 10: Miscellaneous

209. Mindful Breathing with Sight

In this technique, you are aware of your in-breath and then aware of sight one at a time. During exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then aware of a visual object.

Basic Technique

1. "Breathing in, looking at sky"
2. "Breathing out, looking at sky"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

Replace the word 'sky' with other object that you are looking at now such as 'a tree' or 'a computer monitor'.

210. Mindful Breathing with Sight and Smiling

In this technique, you are aware of your in-breath and then aware of a visual object, e.g., sky, one at a time. During exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then smile at the visual object.

Basic Technique

1. "Breathing in, looking at sky"
2. "Breathing out, smiling at sky"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Optional Technique 2
Practice the above technique with other object, such as a tree, nature, a computer screen or whatever object you are looking at now.

Note: When you (mentally) say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to the focus point (your breath). When you say "sky" or "smiling at sky", pay attention to the sky.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

211. Mindful Breathing with Sight and Smiling 2

In this technique, you are aware of your in-breath and then aware of a visual object one at a time. During exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then your eyes. In the next in-breath, you are aware of your breath and then smile at the visual object, e.g., sky, one at a time. In the next exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then smile at your eyes.

Basic Technique

1. "Breathing in, looking at sky"
2. "Breathing out, smiling at the sky"
3. "Breathing in, aware of my eyes"
4. "Breathing out, smiling at my eyes"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Optional Technique 2

Practice the above technique with other object, such as a tree, nature, a computer screen or whatever object you are looking at now.

Note: When you (mentally) say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to the focus point (your breath). When you say "sky" or "smiling at sky", pay attention to the sky.

See also

Why Smiling?

212. Mindful Breathing with Body and Smiling

In this technique, you are aware of your in-breath and then aware of your body one at a time. During exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then smile at your body.

Basic Technique

1. "Breathing in, my body"
2. "Breathing out, smiling at my body"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Note: When you (mentally) say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to the focus point (your breath). When you say "my body" or "smiling at my body", pay attention to your body.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

See also
Why Smiling?

213. Mindful Breathing with Pain and Smiling

In this technique, you are aware of your in-breath and then aware of pain one at a time. During exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then smile at the pain.

Basic Technique

1. "Breathing in, pain"
2. "Breathing out, smiling at the pain"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing
Mindfulness of Pain

See also
Why Smiling?

214. Mindful Breathing with Itchiness and Smiling

This technique (Mindful Breathing with Itchiness and Smiling) is identical to Mindful Breathing with Pain and Smiling except a few. Hence, you can practice this technique by using the Mindful Breathing with Pain and Smiling instruction with the following modification:

- substitute the words 'pain' with 'itchiness' .

This is also applicable to many other situations, for example, when you are experiencing boredom.

215. Mindful Breathing with Unpleasant Feeling and Smiling

In this technique, you are aware of your in-breath and then aware of unpleasant feeling one at a time. During exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then smile at the unpleasant feeling.

Basic Technique

1. "Breathing in, unpleasant feeling"
2. "Breathing out, smiling at the unpleasant feeling"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

See also
Why Smiling?

216. Mindful Breathing with Pleasant Feeling and Smiling

In this technique, you are aware of your in-breath and then aware of pleasant feeling one at a time. During exhalation, you are aware of out-breath and then smile at the pleasant feeling.

Basic Technique

1. "Breathing in, pleasant feeling"
2. "Breathing out, smiling at the pleasant feeling"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

See also
Why Smiling?

217. Mindful Breathing with Sounds

In this technique, you are aware of your breath and then aware of sounds one at a time.

1. "breathing in, sounds"
2. "breathing out, sounds"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

218. Mindfulness of Finger Movements

In the following technique, we will use the 3 hand signs: rock, paper, scissors in the hand game of rock-paper-scissors.

1. Be aware of your finger movements while slow forming the rock.
2. Be aware of your finger movements while slow forming the paper.
3. Be aware of your finger movements while slow forming the scissors.

219. Mindfulness of Eyelids Movements

You can use this technique to be aware of your eyelids movement.

Basic Technique

- Silently say 'closing' when your eyelids are closing.
- Silently say 'opening' when your eyelids are opening.
- Silently say 'blinking' when your eyelids are rapidly closed and opened.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

Practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Optional Technique 2

In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: your intention to move your eyes, which occurs just before the movement; your motivation for moving your eyes; and other experiences.

220. Mindfulness of Eyelids Movements and Breathings

You can use this technique to be aware of your eyelids movement.

Basic Technique
Be aware of movement your eye with a set of phrases.

- Silent say "breathing in, closing" when your eyelids are closing..
- Silent say "breathing in, opening" Label 'down' when your eyelids are opening.
- Silent say "breathing in, blinking" when your eyelids are blinking.

Note: When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your breath. When you say an action of eye lid movement, for example, "closing", pay attention to the movement.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using any words or phrases.

See Also
Mindfulness of Eyelids Movements

221. Mindfulness of Eye Movements and Breathing

You can use this technique to be aware of your eye movement.

Basic Technique
Be aware of movement your eye with a set of phrases.

- Silent say "breathing in, up" when your eyes move toward up direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, down" Label 'down' when your eyes move toward down direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, left" when your eyes move toward left direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, right" when your eyes move toward right direction.
- Silent say "breathing in, circular" when your eyes move in a circular motion.

Note: When you say "breathing in" or "breathing out", pay attention to your breath. When you say a direction of movement, for example, "up", pay attention to the movement.

See Also
Mindfulness of Eye Movements

222. Mindfulness of Thinking Someone

You can practice the following techniques when you are thinking someone, especially the ones who you think often.

Basic Technique
Mentally say "I know I am thinking about the person".

Note: If you know the name of the person, user his or her name instead.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
While thinking of the person, be aware of reactions in your body, for example, tension, relaxation, discomfort and ease.

Advanced Technique 2
While thinking of the person, be aware of feelings whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Advanced Technique 3
While thinking of the person, be aware of your mental reaction whether wanting to avoid, wish to get rid of the memory or wanting to prolong the thought.

Advanced Technique 4
Further notice any other mental contents that may arise. For example, anger, fear, sadness, joy, affection.

Advanced Technique 5
Mentally say the followings:

- "Breath in, I know I am thinking about the person".
- "Breath out, I know I am thinking about the person".

Prerequisites
Mindful Breathing 3

223. Mindfulness of Breath and Feeling

Mentally say:
1. "Breathing in, I feel _________."
2. "Breathing out, I feel _________."

Substitute the underlined blank with your feeling, for example, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

224. Practice to Change Habits

Basic Technique

1. Reflect a habit that you would like to change. For example, watching TV long hours daily, drinking often, waking up late.
2. Reflect a new habit to replace the old habit. For example, imagine that you are reading a book instead of watching TV.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

- Identify benefits of the old habit
- Identify disadvantages of the old habit

Optional Technique

When you reflect, be aware that you are reflecting.

225. Kindness Practice

Basic Technique

1. May I be well and happy.
2. May my loved ones be well and happy.
3. May my friends be well and happy.
4. May my enemies be well and happy.
5. May all living beings be well and happy.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1

- Imagine your loved ones just before starting the above step 2.
- Imagine your friends just before starting the above step 3.
- Imagine your enemies just before starting the above step 4.
- Imagine all living beings just before starting the above step 5.

Note: you could use words 'the people I dislike' instead of 'my enemies'.

226. Kindness Practice and Breathing

Practice kindness with your breath.

Mentally say:
1. "Breathing in, may __I__ be well and happy."
2. "Breathing out, may __I__ be well and happy."
3. You can repeat the above steps by substituting the underlined "I" with 'my parents', 'my family', 'my friends', 'indifferent persons', 'my enemies, 'all living beings' and so on. Alternatively you could use specific name of the person if you prefer.

Note: you could use words 'the people I dislike' instead of 'my enemies'.

227. Mindfulness of Abdominal Movements

Basic Technique

1. Notice the rise and fall of your abdomen while breathing. (not by seeing but by experiencing the body sensations)
2. Silently label 'rising' when inhaling. Silently label 'falling' when exhaling.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1

In the above step 2, do the practice with awareness alone without using any words.

Optional Technique 1

Also occasionally observe whether your mind is focused on your breath.

Tips

Ideally your mind should continuously remain focused on your breath without an interruption during the practice. When your mind wanders, bring your attention gently back to your breath, which is the object of your mindfulness practice.
You may practice the Eight Mindful Breathing in order to calm your body and mind prior to this practice.

228. Mindfulness of Lung Movements

You can be aware of your lungs expansion and contraction with this techniques.

Basic Techniques

- Be aware of expansion when your lungs are expanded.
- Be aware of contraction when your lungs are contracted.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Techniques

- Be aware of physical sensations while your lungs are expanding.
- Be aware of physical sensations while your lungs are contracting.

Note: This is not a practice of imagination or visualization.

229. Mindfulness of Diaphragm Movements

Your diaphragm muscles contract to move downward and relax to move upward. Use this technique to be aware of the involuntary movement of your diaphragm.

Basic Techniques

- Be aware the downward movement of your diaphragm when your diaphragm moves downward.
- Be aware the upward movement of your diaphragm when your diaphragm moves upward.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Techniques

- Be aware of physical sensations of downward movement while diaphragm is moving down.
- Be aware of physical sensations of upward movement while diaphragm is moving up.

230. Mindfulness of Breathing 4

Basic Technique
Be aware whether your breath is short or long.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Optional Technique 1
Be aware whether your breath is shallow or deep.

Optional Technique 2
Be aware whether your breath is natural or being forced in any way.

Optional Technique 3
Be aware whether your attention span during the practice is short or long.

Optional Technique 4
Be aware whether your breath is constricted or easy.

Optional Technique 5
Be aware whether your breathing experience is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

Optional Technique 6
Practice Basic Technique and Optional Technique 1 at the same time.

Optional Technique 7
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

Prerequisites
Mindfulness of Breathing

See Also

Mindfulness of Breathing 3
Mindfulness of Lung Movements
Mindfulness of Diaphragm Movements
Mindfulness of Abdominal Movements

231. Breath Counting

1. Mentally start to count your breath from 1.
2. Start the counting again from 1 when you reach 5 or you forgot to count.

Note: Count inhalation and exhalation as one.

232. Breath Counting 2

1. Start to count your breath from 1 with your fingers.
2. Start the counting again from 1 when you reach 5 or you forgot to count.

Note: Count inhalation and exhalation as one.

233. Mindfulness of Winds

The following technique can be practiced while you feel a wind or breeze.

Basic Technique
Be aware of a wind.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Notice a beginning and an ending of the wind.

Advanced Technique 2
Notice direction of a wind that you feel in your skins.

Advanced Technique 3
Notice speed of the wind.

Advanced Technique 4
Notice intensity of the wind.

Advanced Technique 5
In addition to what are mentioned above, be aware of whatever you are experiencing in your practice (instead of limiting your awareness to one or few specific experiences), for example: wind direction changing; pattern (if there is any pattern); wind temperature; thoughts; feelings; your breath; and other experiences.

234. Mindfulness of Mental Activities with Counting

Basic Technique

- Count each time a mental activity (event) occurs.
- When the counting reaches 10, end this practice.

Note: you can count mentally from 1 to 10 or count with your finger.

Prerequisites

Mindfulness of Mental Activities

235. Personalized Mindfulness Technique

If you need or wish to have personalized mindfulness techniques, please contact the author.

Chapter 11: Advanced

236. Mindful Breathing with Body and Smiling 2

In this technique, you are aware of both your in-breath and your body at the same time. During exhalation, you smile at your body while aware of your out-breath.

Basic Technique

1. Experiencing my body, breathing in
2. Smiling at my body, breathing out.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

237. Mindful Breathing with Pain and Smiling 2

In this technique, you are aware of both your in-breath and pain at the same time. During exhalation, you smile at the pain while aware of your out-breath.

Basic Technique

3. Experiencing pain, breathing in
4. Smiling at the pain, breathing out.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

238. Mindful Breathing with Unpleasant Feeling and Smiling 2

In this technique, you are aware of both your in-breath and unpleasant feeling at the same time. During exhalation, you smile at the unpleasant feeling while aware of your out-breath.

Basic Technique

5. Experiencing unpleasant feeling, breathing in
6. Smiling at the unpleasant feeling, breathing out.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

239. Mindful Breathing with Pleasant Feeling and Smiling 2

In this technique, you are aware of both your in-breath and pleasant feeling at the same time. During exhalation, you smile at the pleasant feeling while aware of your out-breath.

Basic Technique

1. Experiencing pleasant feeling, breathing in
2. Smiling at the pleasant feeling, breathing out.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

240. Mindful Breathing with Sounds 2

In this technique, you are aware of both your breath and sounds at the same time.

1. "hearing sounds, breathing in"
2. "hearing sounds, breathing out"

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Practice with awareness alone without using the phrases.

Prerequisites
Eight Mindful Breathing

241. Mindfulness of Sight While Moving 3

This is a detailed version of Mindfulness of Sight While Moving and Mindfulness of Sight While Moving 2.

Basic Technique
Notice an object is appearing (in your sight while moving). For example,. a house (that is partially or fully hidden behind another house) is emerging in your sight.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Notice an an object has appeared (in your sight while moving). For example, a house (that was hidden behind another house) has emerged in your sight.

Advanced Technique 2
Notice an object is disappearing (in your sight while moving). For example, a house is disappearing (behind another house) in your sight.

Advanced Technique 3
Notice an object has disappeared (in your sight while moving). For example, a house has disappeared (behind another house) and is no longer visible in your sight.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice Basic Technique and Advanced Technique 1 at the same time.

Advanced Technique 3
Gradually practice all of the above techniques at the same time.

242. Mindfulness of Sight While Moving 4

Unlike Mindfulness of Sight While Moving, it is easier to practice this technique while you are moving faster than slowly, for example, riding a car rather than walking.

Basic Technique
Notice an object appears to bigger as you get closer to the object.

After becoming skillful at the basic technique, you can try advanced techniques.

Advanced Technique 1
Notice an object appears to smaller as you get further away from the object.

Advanced Technique 2
Practice both Basic Technique and Advanced Technique at the same time.

243. Mindfulness of Six Sense-Consciousness: part 2

Advanced Technique 6
Practice with awareness alone without using the labels.

Advanced Technique 7
Be aware of arising and passing of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, perceiving experience.

Advanced Technique 8
Be aware of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, perceiving at the same time instead of one at a time.

244. Advanced Eight Mindful Breathing

In the Eight Mindful Breathing (in Chapter 4), you have been using words during practice. In addition, you shifted attention from your breath to the other object while practicing the Mindful Breathing techniques. For example, first you pay attention to your in-breath while you say 'breathing in' and then shifted attention to your body while practicing Mindful Breathing 3.

However in advanced practice, you avoid using words but practice only with awareness alone. In addition, you focus your attention on the both objects at the same time instead of shifting attention from one to the other. For example, pay attention on both breath and your body at the same time.

Chapter 12: Create Your Own Techniques

You can combine multiple techniques to create a new technique for your specific needs or preferences. This chapter shows some examples how to create useful techniques by combining.

245. 3 Minutes Practice

Practice the following for 1 minute each:

- Mindfulness of Breathing (or similar practice)
- Mindfulness of Walking (or similar practice)
- Mindfulness of Breathing (or similar practice)

246. When Feeling Physical Pain

You can practice one or more of the following techniques:

1. Mindfulness of Pain
2. Mindfulness of AMA
3. Kindness Practice
4. Mindfulness of Walking
5. Body Scan
6. Mindfulness of Worry
7. Mindfulness of Breathing

247. When Having Digestion Difficulty

You can practice the following techniques:

1. Mindfulness of AMA
2. Kindness Practice
3. Mindfulness of Walking
4. Body Scan
5. Mindfulness of Worry
6. Mindfulness of Breathing

248. When Feeling Sad

You can practice the following techniques:

1. Mindfulness of Grief
2. Mindfulness of AMA (Automatic Mental Activities)
3. Kindness Practice
4. Mindfulness of Walking
5. Mindfulness of Breathing

249. When Feeling Depressed

1. Mindfulness of AMA (Automatic Mental Activities)
2. Mindfulness of Grief if you feel sad.
3. Mindfulness of Anger if you have an anger
4. Kindness Practice
5. Mindfulness of Walking

250. When Feeling Anxious

You can practice the following techniques:

1. Preparing for an Anxiety
2. Mindfulness of Anxiety
3. Mindfulness of AMA (Automatic Mental Activities)
4. Kindness Practice
5. Body Scan
6. Mindfulness of Breathing
7. Mindfulness of Walking

251. When Difficulty Sleeping

- Body scan
- Mindfulness of AMA
- Mindfulness of Breathing
- Kindness Practice.
- Mindfulness of Anxiety if the sleep difficulty is due to a disturbing memory or thought, which makes you angry, sad or worried.

See Also: When feeling anxiety

252. When Feeling Stressful

- One Mindful Breath
- Mindfulness of Walking
- Mindfulness of Stress
- Mindfulness of Stress 2
- Preparing for Stress
- Mindfulness of Body Tension

253. When Having Hatred

- Mindfulness of Hatred
- Mindfulness of Hatred 2
- Kindness Practice
- Mindfulness of Walking
- One Mindful Breath
- Mindfulness of AMA

254. Separating Mental Pain from Physical Pain

Psychological (mental) pain usually accompanies physical pain. To be aware of physical pain, practice Mindfulness of Pain. To be aware of psychological pain, practice advanced techniques 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Mindfulness of Pain 2.

Chapter 13: Practice Tips

Intention (or Pledge) Technique

Before starting a practice, tell yourself silently that you are going to focus your mind on your breath or an object of your practice.

Resume

When you forget (or lose) the object of your practice, simply continue your practice. For example, gently refocus your mind to the focus point if you are doing Mindfulness of Breathing practice. If you do not remember where or what to continue, simply start your practice from the beginning. (if you are using a timer, no need to reset the timer)

Labeling Technique (training wheels)

During your practice, you can mentally label your experience. For example, you say silently to yourself 'inhaling' when you inhale. You say silently 'exhale' when you exhale.

You can also use labeling technique to be aware of senses, feeling or other experiences, for example, tired, discomfort, shallow breathing, tightened muscle, angry, stressed.

Labeling can be more specific if it is needed, for example, shallow breathing, discomfort in the feet, tightened neck muscles.

What if multiple-awareness occurs at the same time

When you sense multiple events at the same time, choose the sense whichever is the strongest. For example, when you see a bird and hear chirping sound at the same time but the sight is the strongest sense, label it as 'sight'.

Note: Labeling technique helps beginners to develop mindfulness. It is like training wheels on a kid's bike. After developing mindfulness, you won't need it. Labeling itself is a thought, not mindfulness. (So it will be good if you can be aware that you are thinking when you are labeling. However you do not have to do it if you are a beginner.)

Introspection Technique

During your mindfulness practice occasionally observe whether your mind is focused on the object of your practice such as breath.

Last Technique

Remind yourself about the precious opportunity that you have for a practice. This opportunity may be the last practice in your life. Our existence is temporary. Everyone dies without exception. There are nearly endlessly many causes of death but causes of living are few. Death may come any time. There is no guarantee that we will survive until next practice session.

Purpose Technique

Remind yourself the reason why you are doing practice, for example, to help yourself and others.

Advantage and Disadvantage Technique

Remind yourself advantages of practice and disadvantages of not doing practice or letting your mind wander.

How to Monitor Your Heartbeats

Some mindfulness techniques call for being aware of your heartbeats during your practice. There are various techniques to monitor or sense your heartbeats during your practice. Here are some of the techniques.

1. Place your finger tips at your wrist on the thumb side and feel pulses in the finger tips.
2. Place your finger tips on the side of your neck and feel pulses in the finger tips.
3. Bite down teeth gently and feel pulses in your mouth.
4. Hold a fist gently and feel pulses in your fist.
5. Touch tips of two thumbs and feel pulses in your thumbs.
6. Stand upright and feel pulses in soles of your feet.

7. Cross your arms by putting one arm over the other in front of your body, so that each hand is on the opposite elbow and then feel pulses in your arms.
8. Sit on a chair and feel pulses in your pelvis area.
9. Sit cross-legged on a cushion and feel pulse in your legs.
10. Lie down and feel pulses in various parts of your body.
11. Hold a steering wheel and pulses are felt in your hands.

Timer

A timer is an important mindfulness practice aid, especially for beginners. A timer helps you moderate your practice duration to a right amount. An ordinary kitchen timer works very well for this application.

Slow Down

When you practice mindfulness in an activity, you can engage in the activity as you normally do. You don't have to act differently for mindfulness practice. However, if you are rushing, you will need to slow down. It is easier to practice mindfulness, especially for beginners, when you slow down the activity that you are engaged in.

One Thing at a Time

Whenever possible, just do one thing at a time. If you are eating a meal, just eat instead of watching a TV while eating at the same time.

For Eating

1. Leave eating utensil (knife, fork or chop stick) on the table while chewing.
2. Cut food into smaller pieces.
3. Chew food thoroughly without rushing before swallowing.
4. Enjoy eating your meal for 20 or 30 minutes. (use a timer to monitor)
5. Turn off TV (and remove other distractions such as newspaper).

6. Sit down while eating.
7. Dealing with an interruption. For example, if you need to speak, speak as you normally do. After speaking, resume your mindful eating practice.

Plan

Use Mindfulness Practice Plan form (in Appendix A) to plan your mindfulness practice in advance.

Record

Use Mindfulness Practice Record form and Mindfulness Journal form (in Appendix A) to record your practice time and your practice experience.

Measuring Progress

You can measure progress of your mindfulness practice with mindfulness span or mindfulness percentage.

Mindfulness Span

Mindfulness span is the amount of time that a person spent continuously being mindful. To measure:

- Start a timer.
- Start Mindfulness of Breathing.
- Stop the timer when you notice that you forgot to be aware of your breath but are thinking something else. (No need to stop timer when you are aware of thoughts arising and passing).

The accuracy of the measurement will improve as you continue to measure your own progress.

Mindfulness Percentage

Mindfulness percentage is percentage of time you spent being mindful in a given time. For example, if you spent 4 hours being mindful in a day. To calculate the mindfulness percentage, 4 (hours) is divided by 24 (hours). Thus your mindfulness percentage is about 0.17 (or 17 percent). Daily mindfulness percentage is time you spent being mindful in a given day. Likewise, Monthly mindfulness percentage is time you spent being mindful in a given year.

In addition to measuring your progress of mindfulness practice, you can also use mindfulness percentage to determine how much you were mindful in a day, week, or even at your work. The higher the number, the more mindful you are.

Mindfulness Percentage for Mindfulness of Breathing

If you practiced Mindfulness of Breathing for 30 minutes and your mind remain mindful about a half of the time during the practice, then your mindfulness percentage is 50 percent.

Mindfulness Percentage for Eating a Meal

If you eat a lunch for 20 minutes and your mind wandered about a half of the time, your mindfulness percentage is 50 percent.

How to Determine Mindfulness Percentage of a Day

You can track all your daily activities and the time you spent being mindful. For example:

- 6:00 AM - Mindfulness of Breathing (15 min)
- 6:30 AM -Shower and morning routines (10 min)
- 7:00 AM -Breakfast (10 min)
- 8:30 AM -Driving (20 min)
- 10:30 AM- Using computer (20 min)
- 12:30 PM -Lunch (10 min)
- 2:00 PM -Meeting (20 min)
- 5:30 PM -Driving (20 min
- 6:00 PM -Work out at gym (20 min)
- 7:00 PM -Dinner (15 min)
- 8:00 PM -Watching TV (40 min)
- 9:30 AM –Mindfulness of Breathing(15 min)

Note: in the above table, the time you spent being mindful is inside parenthesis. Alternatively you could use Mindfulness Practice Record form in doing so.

To determine mindfulness percentage, accumulate all the numbers in the parenthesis. When you accumulate all the numbers, it becomes 195 minutes. This is the total amount of the time you spent being mindful in a day.

Now you are ready to calculate mindfulness percentage of a day by using the following formula:

> = the total amount of the time you spent being mindful / 24 hours (or 1440 minutes)
>
> 0.13 = 195 / 1440

The mindfulness percentage is 0.13 (or 13 percent). This tells that you were mindful 13 percent of a day.

Likewise you could also determine your weekly or yearly mindfulness percentage.

Formal Sitting Practice

1. Avoid or remove distraction, e.g. turning off cell phone or other electronics.
2. Close your eyes if your eyes get tired or distracted by vision.
3. The duration of a practice may be 1 or 5 minutes long if you are a beginner. See: Optimal Length of a Sitting Practice, How to Start from 1 Minute Practice
4. Use a timer
5. Measure progress

Optimal Length of a Sitting Practice

The optimal length of a sitting practice depends on your experience and circumstances. However, in general, 1 or 5 minutes would be good for beginners in a solo sitting practice.

To find an optimal length, measure your average mindfulness span and then rounding up (See Measuring Progress). For example, if your average mindfulness span is ½ minute, use 1 minute as an optimal length. As your skills are developed, your mindfulness span and optimal length are naturally increased.

How to Start from 1 Minute Practice

When beginners practice Mindfulness of Breathing technique alone, a short duration is better than a long duration. 1 minute (or even 3 minutes) can be a good amount of practice duration for a beginner.

1. Practice Mindfulness of Breathing for 1 minute daily once.
2. Increase daily repetition of the practice if it is possible.
3. At the end of week, adjust (increase or decrease) the practice duration.
4. Go to the step 1.

With little practice, you should soon be able to calm your mind and remain calm during your 1 minute mindfulness practice. After you were able to calm your mind for the first time during 1 minute practice, you should repeat the one minute sitting practice. When you become skillful at the one minute practice, you can increase daily repetition of the practice. For example, you could repeat the one minute practice 3 times to 5 times daily.

When you can achieve calmness and concentration almost consistently in your practices for several days or a week, you can go to the next level by increasing your practice duration to 2 minutes. In other word, increase your practice duration by one minute and continue to practice as described earlier. With this method, you will eventually be able to sit and calm your mind for a long period of time effortlessly.

Note: Although you are not a complete beginner, this technique can still benefit you if you have a difficulty calming your mind. If you can practice for 5 minutes without any distraction, you should practice about 5 minutes when you practice alone. You can gradually increase the duration of your practice as described above.

Mindfulness Span Based Training

Measuring mindfulness span itself is a good mindfulness practice and, at the same time, you can easily measure progress of your practice. This simple technique also helps prevent problem of overpracticing in duration and underpracticing in repetition.

1. measure mindfulness span daily at least once (twice or more is better)
2. calculate average mindfulness span a week later.

How to Calm Busy Mind

If your mind is busy, that is good because you can use your busy mind to develop mindfulness. Instead of trying to stop thoughts, welcome them whatever arises. For example, label "arising" when a thought comes into your mind. (See Mindfulness of Mental Activities)

Practice for a short amount of the time. Repeat the short session as many time as you can with a generous amount of break time in between the sessions. (See How to Start from 1 Minute Practice.)

Practice your favorite practice, for example, mindful walking, mindful qigong.

See Also

Three Key Guidelines of Mindfulness Practice

Eight Mindful Breathing.
Optimal Length of a Sitting Practice
How to Start from 1 Minute Practice
Common (or easy to make) mistakes in practice

When Sounds Distract

You can take advantage of sounds to develop mindfulness when there are plenty of sounds. Try Mindfulness of Sounds. If it is a still difficulty, find a quieter place to practice.

Sitting Posture

Posture is important if you are a serious practitioner or intend to practice in a sitting position for a long period time. Here are seven points of sitting posture to consider.

1. The sitting position on cushion or chair should be comfortable
2. Your back should be straight but not tense and rigid.
3. The position of your neck is held tall while lightly tilting the skull down a few millimeters by gently bringing in your chin inward.
4. The position of your shoulders should be back a little.
5. The position of your hands should either a) flat, palms down, resting on your lap or your knees, or b) on your lap with the right hand in the left hand, palms up and the thumbs touching.
6. Your eyes look down the tip of your nose or look down on floor.
7. The position of your mouth and tongue; your mouth can is closed. The tongue is relaxed in a natural position, or the tip of the tongue can lightly touch the roof of the mouth just behind the area where the gum meet the upper front teeth.

Tip: the following imagination helps you to straight your spine and neck. Imagine your back and neck are a straight stack of coins or bricks. Or imagine your body is suspended in the air by a string attached to the top of your skull and the string is pulling your head upward, as a result your spine and neck are straightened.

Why smiling?

- Why smiling at an unpleasant feeling or pain? This is to counteract our automatic tendency to runaway (or avoid) from the unpleasant experiences. When we smile at unpleasant feeling, it helps us not to runaway but also helps us be aware of the unpleasant feeling as it is without distortion.
- Why smiling at a pleasant feeling? This acknowledges our joy or happiness. This helps us to be mindful at pleasant feeling.
- Why smiling at a neutral feeling? This helps us to be mindful and discover pleasantness. When we are not mindful, pleasantness can be perceived as neutral. However, when you are mindful, you can discover pleasantness. For example, you could perceive seeing the sky a neutral feeling. However when you are aware that having eyes are fortunate, the seeing the sky can become a pleasant feeling.
- Alternative: If you ever prefer to use an alternative word to 'smile', you could substitute 'smile at' with 'embrace', 'welcome' or 'accept'.

Mindfulness Reminders (cues)

A mindfulness reminder is a reminder to practice mindfulness. For example,When you hear the phone ring, you be aware of your breath (i.e., practicing One Mindful Breath). You could designate any specific situation or object as a mindfulness reminder (to practice a specific mindfulness technique) example,

Reminder	Practice (action)
stopped at a red traffic light	One Mindful Breath
opening a door	Mindfulness of Hand Movements
wearing a jacket	Mindfulness of Hand

	Movements
a specific cup (of yours)	Mindfulness of Hand Movement while drinking out of it or washing it.

Thumb Bending

Gently bend your a thumb finger inward when you noticed your mind wanders off. Gently release the bending when your mind comes back to the object of your practice (or present moment). You can use this technique in most of your mindfulness practice.

Three Key Guidelines of Mindfulness Practice

1. Daily - Practice daily
2. Seek - a help for the problem that you can not solve on your own.
3. Group - Practice in a group as well as alone.

Common (or easy to make) mistakes in practice

1. Trying to stop all thoughts.
2. Suppressing unwanted thoughts.
3. Clinging to pleasant thoughts.
4. Infrequent long duration of practice in a solo practice.
5. Visualizing.
6. Lost in thoughts.
7. Wanting a perfect practice.
8. Try to think positive (or negative).
9. Breaking 3 Golden Rules of Practice.
10. Incorrect posture during in a formal practice.
11. Unaware of obstacles.
12. Try to understand 'mindfulness' as a concept or in words.
15. Not measuring progress.
16. Falling a sleep.

Miscellaneous

1. Mindfulness is not becoming oblivious. Paying attention to an object during your mindfulness practice does not mean that you must block other experiences or be oblivious to other experiences. When other experience arises (or whatever happens in your mind, body and surroundings), just be aware it and bring your attention back to the object of your practice.
2. Thinking is not mindfulness and vice versa. For example, while you are eating food, you think "this food tastes good". The thought is your opinion or reaction to the taste of the food, but it is not mindfulness. Whereas, a sensory experience you had on the taste of the food is mindfulness. Mindfulness comes before thinking. For example, when you put food in our mouth, you notice taste the food and then think. The awareness on the taste of the food before the thinking is the mindfulness.
3. Imagination is not mindfulness either. Regardless some of the mindfulness techniques suggest use of imagination (or recalling the past memory) before starting a mindfulness practice. For example, if you do not have anger in the present moment, you can not practice Mindfulness of Anger. Thus the technique suggests you to image a situation (or recall a memory) to experience an angry for the sake of the practice. Thus, imagination was merely used as a tool to prepare for a mindfulness practice.
4. Controlling breath is not a mindfulness practice. You do not have to control your breath, for example, holding, stopping or forcing into a rhythm. Let your body breathe normally instead. You should breathe normally without any attempt to control your breath. However if you are controlling your breath, be aware that you are controlling your breath.
5. Present moment awareness: Just like your body lives in the present moment, let your mind also live in the present moment to be aware of the present moment.

All the following tips are related to a formal sitting practice.

Chapter 14: Retreat

To advance and deepen your mindfulness practice skills, you could join mindfulness retreats. Furthermore you can create your own retreat programs that meet your specific needs and preferences. You could practice together with other like-minded practitioners in a group. A retreat should include at least one experienced practitioner in the group.

A Half Day Personal Retreat

You could create your own personal retreat program for your weekend morning at your home. You could invite like-minded friends to practice mindfulness together in a group.

- 5:45 AM – Wake up.
- 6:00 AM –Practice Eight Mindful Breathing and Mindfulness of Breathing.
- 6:30 AM - Exercise, e.g., tai chi, jogging, yoga. Practice Mindfulness of Tai Chi, Mindfulness of Yoga, Mindfulness of Running or Mindfulness of Weight Lifting.
- 7:00 AM – Shower and get ready for a day. Practice Mindfulness of Shower, Mindfulness of Wearing Clothes.
- 7:30 AM – Breakfast. Practice Mindfulness of Eating
- 8:00 AM – Brush teeth. Practice Mindfulness of Brushing Teeth.
- 8:10 AM – Wash dishes. Practice Mindfulness of Washing Dishes or Mindfulness of Loading Dishwasher.
- 8:30 AM – Take a walk. Practice Mindfulness of Walking
- 9:00 AM –Practice Mindfulness of Breathing
- 9:30 AM – Tea time. Practice Mindfulness of Drinking a Cup of Tea.
- 10:00 AM - Practice Mindfulness of Breathing
- 10:30 AM - Chore. Practice any of the followings: Mindfulness of Watering Plants, Mindfulness of Unloading Dishwasher, Mindfulness of Vacuuming, Mindfulness of Hand Movements.
- 11:00 AM – Practice Mindfulness of Gratitude, Kindness Practice, and Mindfulness of Feelings.
- 11:30 AM – Practice Mindfulness of Breathing
- 12:00 PM - End.

Rules: Avoid speaking unless it is necessary. Also avoid doing activities that are not related to the retreat.

A Silent Retreat

- 9:00 AM – Instruction
- 9:30 AM - Sitting and walking
- 12:00 PM – Mindful eating (lunch)
- 1:00 PM – Personal Practice (e.g., Mindfulness of Qigong, Mindfulness of Walking. Mindfulness of Yoga. optional interview with the teacher)
- 2:00 PM – Sitting and walking
- 2:30 AM – Break. (or Personal Practice)
- 3:00 PM - Sitting and walking
- 3:30 PM – A discussion.
- 4:00 PM – End.

The following techniques may be suitable to practice during the retreat: Mindfulness of Breathing, Mindfulness of Sitting, Mindfulness of Walking, (Mindfulness of Sight while Moving), Mindfulness of Hand Movements, Mindfulness of Hand Movements, Body Scan, Mindfulness of Mind, Mindfulness of Mental Contents,) 8 Mindful Breathing, Mindfulness of Mental Activities, Mindfulness of Hunger, Mindfulness of Feeling, Mindfulness of Wanting, Mindfulness of Eating, Mindfulness of Washing Hands, Mindfulness of Drying Hands, Mindfulness of Yoga, Mindfulness of Tai Chi, Mindfulness of Listening, Mindfulness of Speaking, Mindfulness of Gratitude, Kindness Practice, Mindfulness of Six Sense Consciousness .

Rules: Avoid speaking unless it is necessary. Also avoid doing activities that are not related to the retreat.

A Silent Retreat 2

- 9:00 AM – Instructions
- 9: 30 AM - Practice Eight Mindful Breathings and Mindfulness of Breathing.
- 10:00 AM –Practice Mindfulness of Walking
- 10:15 AM - Practice Mindfulness of Breathing.
- 10:45 AM –Practice Mindfulness of Walking
- 11:00 AM - Practice Mindfulness of Mind, Mindfulness of Mental Contents, Mindfulness of Mental Activities, and Mindfulness of AMA.
- 11:30 AM –Practice Mindfulness of Walking
- 11:45 AM – Break.
- 12:00 PM – Mindful eating (lunch). Practice Mindfulness of Washing Hands, Mindfulness of Drying Hands, and Mindfulness of Eating.
- 1:00 PM - Practice Mindful Movements (Mindfulness of Walking, Mindfulness of Yoga or Mindfulness of Qigong).
- 2:00 PM - Practice Mindfulness of Breathing.
- 2:30 PM - Practice Mindfulness of Walking.
- 2:45 PM – Break. (personal practice time)
- 3:15 PM - Practice Mindfulness of Breathing
- 3:45 PM - Practice Mindfulness of Walking.
- 4:00 PM - Practice Mindfulness of Breathing
- 4:30 PM – A discussion. Practice Mindfulness of Listening and Mindfulness of Speaking.
- 4:50 PM- • Practice Mindfulness of Gratitude and Mindfulness of Kindness Practice.
- 5:00 PM – End.

Rules: Avoid speaking unless it is necessary. Also avoid doing activities that are not related to the retreat.

A Half Day Silent Retreat

- 10:00 AM – Instructions
- 10:30 AM - Sitting and walking
- 12:00 PM – Mindful eating (lunch)
- 1:00 PM –Mindful qigong (mindful movements)
- 1:30 AM – Sitting
- 2:00 PM – Mindful speaking and listening
- 2:30 PM – End.

The following techniques may be suitable to practice during the retreat: Mindfulness of Breathing, Mindfulness of Sitting, Mindfulness of Walking, (Mindfulness of Sight while Moving), Mindfulness of Hand Movements, Mindfulness of Hand Movements, Body Scan, Mindfulness of Mind, Mindfulness of Mental Contents,) 8 Mindful Breathing, Mindfulness of Mental Activities, Mindfulness of Hunger, Mindfulness of Feeling, Mindfulness of Wanting, Mindfulness of Eating, Mindfulness of Washing Hands, Mindfulness of Drying Hands, Mindfulness of Qigong, Mindfulness of Tai Chi, Mindfulness of Yoga, Mindfulness of Listening, Mindfulness of Speaking, Mindfulness of Gratitude, Kindness Practice, Mindfulness of Six Sense Consciousness .

Rules: Avoid speaking unless it is necessary. Also avoid doing activities that are not related to the retreat.

A Half Day Silent Retreat 2

- 10:00 AM – Instructions
- 10:15 AM – Sitting (guided practice).
- 10:45 AM – Walking
- 11:00 AM - Sitting
- 11:30 AM – Walking
- 11:45 AM – Sitting
- 12:00 PM – Lunch. (Practice Mindfulness of Washing Hands, Mindfulness of Drying Hands, and Mindfulness of Eating.)
- 1:00 PM –Personal Practice. For example, practice Mindfulness of Walking, Mindfulness of Yoga or Mindfulness or Tai Chi.
- 1:30 AM – Sitting
- 2:00 PM – A discussion. (Practice Mindfulness of Listening and Mindfulness of Speaking.)
- 2:30 PM – End.

Rules: Avoid speaking unless it is necessary. Also avoid doing activities that are not related to the retreat.

A City Retreat

City retreat is a retreat for city dwelling practitioners with busy life. City retreat complements a traditional silent retreat. Unlike traditional silent retreat, this retreat takes place in both indoor and in the busy city, e.g., a store or train. City retreat includes mindfulness practices in our common daily activities such as eating, checking email, shopping, street walking, riding a car, speaking, waiting. These activities are what we usually do in our daily life. The goal is to provide city dwelling practitioners with techniques that they can practice in their daily life and ultimately help advance their mindfulness practice skills. Such techniques can be used throughout his or her daily life by the practitioner. So it is useful and practical for city dwelling practitioners.

- 9:00 AM - Instruction
- 9:30 AM – Practice Mindfulness of Breathing.
- 10:00 AM – Discussion on mindfulness practice experience. Practice Mindfulness of Speaking and Mindfulness of Listening.
- 10:30 AM – Check email. Practice Mindfulness of Using a Computer or Mindfulness of Waiting.*
- 11:30 AM – Walking on a street. Practice Mindfulness of Walking 6.
- 12:00 PM – Lunch. Practice Mindfulness of Washing Hands Mindfulness of Drying Hands, and Mindfulness of Eating.
- 1:00 PM – Cleaning. Practice Mindfulness of Washing Dishes or Mindfulness of Loading Dishwasher.
- 1:30 PM – Car riding or driving to a Walmart store. Practice Mindfulness of Driving or Mindfulness Practice in a Bus, Train or Airplane, Mindfulness in a Walmart store.
- 2:00 PM – Walk in Walmart. Practice Mindfulness of Walking. Mindfulness of Sight While Moving, Mindfulness of Wanting, Mindfulness of Attraction, Mindfulness of Sight with a Gaze.

- 3:00 PM Come back. Practice Mindfulness of Driving or Mindfulness Practice in a Bus, Train or Airplane, Mindfulness of Sight while Moving.
- 3:30 AM - Practice Mindfulness of Breathing.
- 4:00 PM Using phone. Practice Mindfulness of Phone Ring, Mindfulness of Speaking, Mindfulness of Listening.
- 4:15 PM – Discussion on retreat participation experience. Practice Mindfulness of Speaking and Mindfulness of Listening.
- 4:30 PM - End.

If there is only one computer, one person practice Mindfulness of Using a Computer while others may practice Mindfulness of Waiting while waiting for their turn.

A Micro Retreat

If you can not afford time for a day long retreat, a micro retreat is an option. When you have 9 minute break in your busy schedule at work or school, you can practice this micro retreat. In essence, you do 3 minutes of Mindfulness of Breathing practice followed by 3 minutes of Mindfulness of Walking and another 3 minutes of Mindfulness of Breathing practice. It is total 9 minutes long. An advantage of this micro retreat is that you can easily do this retreat everyday even though you have a hectic schedule. You could even repeat this retreat several times a day. This micro retreat does not require a group, commitment or much time. So you can practice it alone whenever you have nine minutes of time.

- Practice Mindfulness of Breathing for 3 minutes.
- Practice Mindfulness of Walking for 3 minutes.
- Practice Mindfulness of Breathing for 3 minutes.

Glossary

- **focus point**. a body area where you feel the strongest or distinctive physical sensation due to airflow through in your respiratory system while breathing. For example, a focus point can be nostrils, inner nose, throat, an air passage in your chest or your abdomen.
- **mental content or content of mind**. something (a phenomenon) that occurs (or exists) in your mind, for example, thoughts, images, memories, concepts, feelings, perceptions and intentions.
- **mindfulness span.** The amount of time that a person spent continuously being mindful (being aware of what's going on or what exists in the present moment).
- **mindfulness percentage**. Mindfulness percentage is percentage of time you spent being mindful in a given time. For example, if you spent 4 hours being mindful in a day. To calculate the mindfulness percentage, 4 (hours) is divided by 24 (hours). Thus your mindfulness percentage is about 17. Daily mindfulness percentage is time you spent being mindful in a given day. Likewise, Monthly mindfulness percentage is time you spent being mindful in a given year.
- **physical sensation list.** aching, burning, burning, choking, cold, compressed , contracted, cool, deep, dizziness, fleeting, hot, itchiness, moving, piercing, pinching, pressing, prickling, prickling., pulling, pulsing, pulsing, relaxed, sharp, stabbing, stinging, stretching, sweating, throbbing, throbbing, tight, tightness, tingling, tingling, trembling, warm, pain.
- **pressure point**. A pressure point is a body area where you feel the pressure of your body weight. Your body posture (or position) decides pressure points. For example, pressure points are your feet while standing upright. Pressure points are feet, thigh and buttocks while sitting in a chair. Pressure points are head, back, hip, legs when you are lying down.

Pressure points are shifting from one foot to the other while walking.

- **sensitive area.** A sensitive area is a body part that shows symptoms of tension, discomfort or tightness when you have unpleasant feeling or experience unpleasantness in your body or mind.

Appendix A: Forms

Form 1: Mindfulness Practice Record

Enter the number of minute that you practiced.

Date	MB.*	walking	eating	cleaning	_____	Total	MP**
Total							

* MB (Mindfulness of Breathing)
** MP (Mindfulness Percentage)

Form 2: Mindfulness Practice Plan

Enter the time when you will practice.

Mon-Fri, Sat, Sun (circle appropriate days)

	duration	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
e.g. BA	3 min	6:30 am	7:10 am			
MB*						
Eating						
Walking						
Cleaning						
Cooking						
_________						

MB (Mindfulness of Breathing)

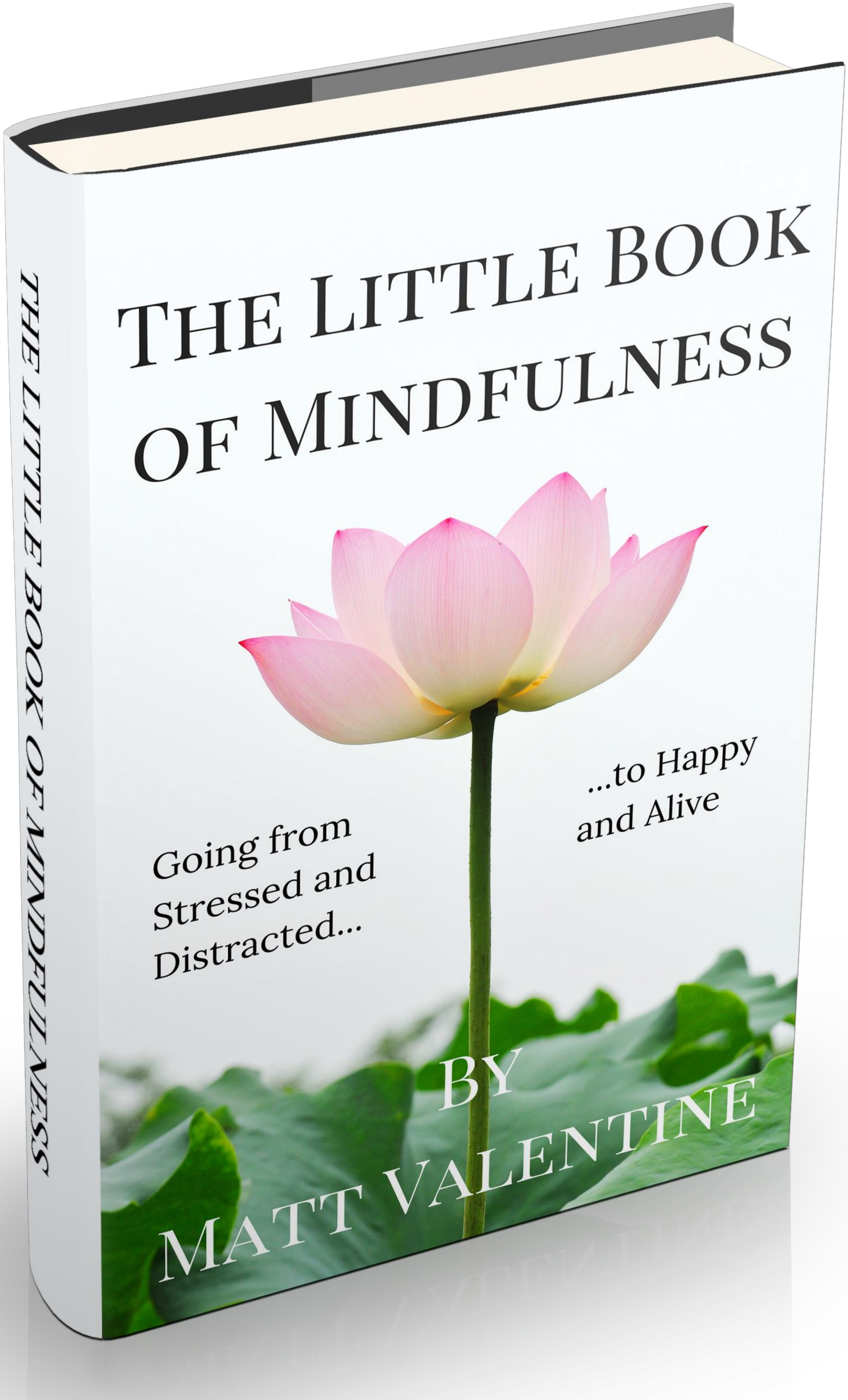
Form 3: Mindfulness Journal

Enter your practice experience in detail.

Date and time	
Practice name	
Duration	
Experience	

About the Author

Sung Yang is a mindfulness teacher. He has taught mindfulness to people from all walks of life. He began practicing mindfulness in the late 1970s and has long been advocating the benefits of mindfulness for mental and physical health. He is serving Canadian Mental Health Association the South Fraser branch as a director. He lives in Surrey, Canada.



THE LITTLE BOOK OF MINDFULNESS

Going from Stressed and Distracted...

...to Happy and Alive

BY MATT VALENTINE

THE LITTLE BOOK OF MINDFULNESS

The Little Book of Mindfulness

By Matt Valentine

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MORE FROM MATT VALENTINE ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

Wakefulness is the way to life.
The fool sleeps
As if he were already dead,
But the master is awake
And he lives forever.

He watches.
He is clear.

How happy he is!
For he sees that wakefulness is life.
How happy he is,
Following the path of the awakened.

– The Buddha

Introduction

It's difficult to fully capture the essence of mindfulness in words. On one end, you could describe it as a specific type of paying attention to the present moment. Sounds simple enough, but that definition doesn't describe the whole of what mindfulness is. On the other end, you could say mindfulness is like having an aura of light which emanates from you. A light which peels back the layers of your perception and allows you to experience reality in its true form, filled with absolute peace, joy, and true freedom. That one does a good job of describing the purpose of mindfulness, but even it doesn't fully capture the essence mindfulness completely. And if that second one sounded a bit deep, that's because it was. Mindfulness, along with its partner concentration, is the very act of looking and living deeply. Mindfulness is itself *the very energy of life itself*.

To be mindful is in fact to be truly alive. By truly alive, I mean a state in which you're completely and absolutely awake to this very moment of your life. Without mindfulness, we float through life only half awake, not fully aware of what's happening around or inside of us. This starves us of much of the joy in life. But I don't just mean that if you're walking down the street you won't notice the flowers in someone's garden as you pass by. I mean that even if you see a flower you won't really be able to see the *true flower*. The true flower is itself a flower. You can see, smell, and touch it. You know it's there and you know it's a flower. But at the same time the true flower isn't a flower at all. To see the true flower means to see that the flower is made up of all non-flower elements. The sun, the rain, the soil, the various elements in the soil, and the gardener who watered the flower. If you were to return even one of these elements to their source the flower would cease to exist. And the same can be said of you.

To see the true flower, and to know that you're intrinsically connected to it and everything else around you, is to experience a deep sense of peace and joy. This is what it means to live deeply with mindfulness. By living deeply with mindfulness we can touch the ground of our being. But this isn't some esoteric philosophical concept. There's no intellectual explanations, no theories, and no guesswork with mindfulness. Mindfulness isn't about beliefs. *It's about what is.* It's about discovering your true nature. By living deeply *in this moment* you can touch the ground of your being and experience true peace and happiness.

I was first introduced to mindfulness through a book. It was a beautiful book and I learned so much about mindfulness from it that still to this day I come back to learn from it. But it never provided an adequate enough explanation of what mindfulness was. In fact, nothing really captured the full extent of the power and practice of mindfulness. It's because of this that I wasted a lot of time in the beginning stages of my own mindfulness practice. I absorbed as much information as possible, practiced to the best of my ability, and still didn't seem to get things right. It took some time before I really understood what mindfulness was and how to practice it correctly. It's because of both the incredible impact that mindfulness has had on my own life and because of what I went through to properly learn mindfulness that I felt compelled to write about what I had learned and provide a resource that others could use that would make learning about and adopting the practice of mindfulness clear and straightforward.

The Little Book of Mindfulness is about teaching you what mindfulness is, why mindfulness is important, how to practice mindfulness, and how to develop mindfulness as a habit in simple and clear language. Mindfulness has been practiced for some 2,500 years by the Buddha and his long lineage of disciples, as well as many other spiritual traditions (whether they call it mindfulness or not). It isn't the only key to spiritual awakening or even just a healthy personal practice. But it is one of, if not the, most important pieces of a nourishing and healing spiritual practice which leads to true peace and happiness. I hope to present this great gift, a gift which was given to me in much the same manner, in the best way possible. To receive the gift of mindfulness is to receive the key which can change your entire life. I hope you'll accept this gift. In reality, it's not mine to give. It's already yours. You’ve had it all your life and you just didn’t know it. Realize the incredible gift that this moment is.

How to Use *The Little Book of Mindfulness*

My primary goal in writing *The Little Book of Mindfulness* was to provide a convenient resource which broke down mindfulness in a way that made it crystal clear to understand, super easy to learn, and straightforward to apply as a new positive habit for anyone whether that person had prior knowledge or experience with mindfulness or not. *The Little Book of Mindfulness* is separated based on the three major aspects of adopting mindfulness as a daily practice: learning what mindfulness is, learning how to practice mindfulness, and learning how to bring mindfulness into your everyday life as a daily practice which nourishes your mind and body.

Part 1 is titled *What is Mindfulness?* It covers, you guessed it, what mindfulness is along with a thorough explanation of its inner workings and the major benefits or reasons why someone should make mindfulness a part of their lives. Part 2 is titled *Practicing Mindfulness* and it covers the major mindfulness practices such as mindful sitting, mindful walking, mindful breathing, as well as a chapter on a number of common areas where the average person can practice mindfulness. Part 3 is titled *Developing Mindfulness* and it’s all about developing mindfulness as a daily practice. This section is very important. Without Part 3 it would be easy to finish the book and then throw it to the wayside. The purpose of this book isn’t to provide a bunch of information and then let you loose without any direction or guidance. If you follow the suggestions in Part 3 you’ll have a whole array of techniques which you can use to immediately begin applying mindfulness as a part of your daily life.

And so it’s for this reason that I felt a simple introduction wouldn’t suffice. This short section is about how to make the most of *The Little Book of Mindfulness*. So there’s a few key points that

I'd like to cover. Below is a small list of points you should keep in mind when reading. By keeping these points in mind you'll enhance your reading experience and make the most of the information provided. Don't just read this book and think you'll know how to practice mindfulness all of a sudden. It takes actual practice and some patience. But by following the tips that follow you'll ensure you cultivate an environment conducive to developing mindfulness.

1. Read *with mindfulness*

I want you to strive to read as much of this book *in mindfulness* as possible. Let this book be not just a book, but a place to begin developing your practice of mindfulness. Let it also be a lesson that you can practice mindfulness anywhere and at any time. That is, if you remember, which can be difficult with how much the average person keeps on their plate. But I'm getting ahead of myself, we'll have a chapter for tackling that later. Now, you might be thinking, "But I don't know how to practice mindfulness, how am I supposed to read this book in mindfulness?" Don't worry, we'll go over that in the next chapter. So for now, you'll have to wait. Keep these tips in mind though: In order to read this book in mindfulness, particularly if you're just beginning your practice, you'll want to minimize distractions before you read. This includes distractions from within. Empty your mind (as much as possible) before reading. If there's something you're worried about or are having a hard time getting out of your head, imagine yourself gently placing it aside and tell yourself it's OK to bring it back once you're done reading. Put 100% of your focus onto reading the book. Read the book with all of your being. During this time, as with anytime you practice mindfulness, nothing else matters more than what you're doing in that moment. In this case, nothing matters more than the act of reading. Be fully present for every single word. If your thoughts stray, acknowledge the thought and come back to the book. By reading the book in this way you open your mind fully to the information in this book. This can do a number of beautiful things, such as improve your ability to absorb the content and make reading more enjoyable. Not to mention, you begin practicing mindfulness for yourself. Don't worry about knowing everything about mindfulness right now, what's important is that you make the effort.

2. Take your time

Take your time and really enjoy every page with all of your being. This book isn't meant to be raced through. To increase your chances of absorbing the information and really using it to apply positive change to your life you need to take your time and let certain pieces of information "sit" in your consciousness so to speak. After reading the chapter on "Awakening to Your True Nature", for instance, you might want to take a day off and contemplate on the material. At this point, you'll have been introduced to mindfulness and know what it's all about so you should be able to also start practicing mindfulness in your everyday life in between reading sessions.

And if you're thinking it might take a while to read this entire book in mindfulness, erase such thoughts right now. Reading is a chance to learn something new which can positively affect your life, don't pass up that chance by trying to rush through the book just for the satisfaction of being able to tell yourself "I read a new book!" Really take your time and absorb the information presented. Mindfulness can completely change your life. Don't pass up the opportunity.

3. Take action

If you want to really take everything you can from reading *The Little Book of Mindfulness*, you can't just read the book. Reading the book itself in mindfulness is a great start, but you also need to put what's talked about throughout the book into practice in your daily life. You need to take action.

Mindfulness works like anything else in life. That is, it’s an action which has a certain amount of “energy” associated with it. This energy is all around us and in everything. And it pulls us in the direction we’re accustomed to moving in unless we make it a point to redirect this energy. I’ll explain this energy in more detail later, for now just know that it takes work to develop mindfulness as a regular part of your life. But it’s infinitely worthwhile to do so, as I’ll explain in Part 1. Be patient and don’t expect to get it right from the start. Make it a point to be nonjudgmental about your practice. That is, be aware of how you’re behaving and what’s occurring within your practice. But, don’t judge yourself negatively no matter what happens. Go an entire day and forget to practice? That’s OK, I had many days like that at the beginning. You’ll get through it. Don’t judge yourself or get discouraged, just keep moving forward one step at a time. I didn’t have anyone to talk to on a daily basis or anyone teaching me personally in a monastery. I had to develop the habit essentially on my own. In Part 3 I’ll show you the techniques which I used to establish the practice of mindfulness in my daily life.

* * *

You're now ready to venture into the world of mindfulness and discover what it means to be truly alive. I wanted to end by taking a second to say thanks for reading. I put my all into writing *The Little Book of Mindfulness,* so it's filled to the brim with valuable information. I originally planned for this book to be somewhere around fifty pages. But the "little" book of mindfulness turned out to be a bit larger than I originally thought (nearly triple that, as you'll see). It's filled with valuable information, the same information that transformed my life in so many ways. If it in some way brings some sort of positive change to your own life then I'd love to hear from you (we'll connect again at the end of the book, where I'll show you how).

Peace,
Matt

Part 1: What is Mindfulness?

The Origins of Mindfulness

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The Buddha, also sometimes referred to as Shakyamuni or Guatama Buddha, was born Siddhārtha Gautama. Siddhārtha was born and lived some 2,400-2,600 years ago, likely between 500 and 400 BCE, in either what is now modern day India or Nepal. At the age of 29, Siddhārtha set out on a spiritual journey. He wanted to find a way to alleviate his suffering as well as the suffering of others. And ultimately, to find the true path to peace and happiness. Six years later, at the age of 35, Siddhārtha is said to have sat at the foot of the now famous Bodhi tree and achieved complete awakening (or enlightenment, in many English translations). For forty five years after his great awakening, Siddhārtha Gautama, now the Buddha, travelled around ancient India and Nepal spreading his teachings. And among those teachings was mindfulness.
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When the Buddha was asked, "Sir, what do you and your monks practice?" he responded with, "We sit, we walk, and we eat." The man then asked, "But sir, everyone sits, walks, and eats." The Buddha replied, "When we sit, *we know* we are sitting. When we walk, *we know* we are walking. When we eat, *we know* we are eating." This was the Buddha's practice. But what exactly did he mean? The Buddha was referring to living fully in the present moment with *mindfulness*. Living in a way that we're fully awake to the present moment. To the Buddha, mindfulness was a matter of life or death. But not life or death in a literal sense. Rather, to do something in mindfulness is to become truly alive in that moment. The Buddha didn't discover mindfulness, he simply showed us how to use it to its full potential. Like a great lighthouse which illuminates the dark ocean, the Buddha showed us how to shine mindfulness like a light on ourselves and the world around us in order to unveil and break down the many roadblocks between us and true peace and happiness.

Mindfulness is often described in the West as, "having origins in ancient meditative practices" or something to that degree, and that a non-secular version of mindfulness has been adapted for professional use. There's nothing necessarily wrong with saying the origins of mindfulness are in ancient meditative or spiritual practices. This is a true statement. But by not *fully* recognizing or understanding where mindfulness came from it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to realize its full potential.

Also, mindfulness is often misunderstood by some in the West as having an updated or modernized version of itself. But nothing, nor anyone, has ever changed what mindfulness is or how it functions. This misunderstanding likely stems from the West's general misunderstanding of the dharmic traditions as a whole. By dharmic I mean all those spiritual traditions which arose in and around ancient India- Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga, and the lesser known Jainism. Mindfulness isn't inherently eastern, western, Buddhist, religious, or anything else. Mindfulness has no labels. Even "mindfulness" is just the word we use to describe it, it isn't mindfulness at all. Mindfulness is beyond language. It's a powerful and unchanging ability which we all possess the potential to express. Understanding this is important. But it's equally important to understand the origins of mindfulness in our world. When was it first used? Why was it used? How has that evolved?

Mindfulness is the English translation of the Sanskrit word “smrti” (“sati” in Pali) which translates literally as “memory”. Brahmans of the Vedic faith in ancient India are thought to have used this complete presence of mind to recall huge bodies of text due to the fact that nothing was written down at the time. The Vedic faith, a precursor to modern Hinduism, is believed to have existed from 1750 to 500 B.C.E., which places its end point (500 B.C.E.) somewhere in or around the Buddha’s life. But that wasn’t all the Buddha adopted from the ancient Brahman tradition. “The four immeasurable minds” of love, compassion, equanimity, and joy are considered by many to be one of the highest teachings of Buddhism, which the Buddha adopted from the Vedic spiritual tradition. The Buddha was something of a scientist. Through diligent practice he saw the glimmers of truth that existed in each spiritual tradition of his time and sifted those truths out to form what would later be called Buddhism. This was based strictly on direct experience, as opposed to mere belief or superstition. It’s probably for this very reason that the Buddha is said to have been able to speak skillfully to people from the language of their own tradition.

The Buddha adopted mindfulness in his own practice and teaching, and used it to refer to both “memory” as well as “presence of mind”. This was the birth of the mindfulness we know today. All of Buddhist scripture refers to mindfulness in this way.

Like a great lighthouse which illuminates the dark ocean, the Buddha showed us how to shine mindfulness like a light on ourselves and the world around us in order to unveil and break down the many roadblocks between us and true peace and happiness.

West Meets East

Fast-forward some 2,500 years and you arrive at the modern mindfulness "movement" in the West. Mindfulness began spreading throughout the United States about a quarter century ago, but it wasn't until the last decade that it really started picking up steam. And now, as of writing this, it's exploded in popularity all across the United States. Mindfulness has now expanded to Wall Street, Silicon Valley, major medical centers, hospitals, countless companies, and even many classrooms throughout the United States. Entire magazines, blogs, and of course, books, devoted to mindfulness have arisen from this as well. And it continues to spread by the day. If you had to pinpoint what caused mindfulness to spread throughout the West in recent decades, it would be because of Thich Nhat Hanh, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and the scientific research on mindfulness.

It all started with a Vietnamese Zen master, writer, and peace activist by the name of Thich Nhat Hanh. Thich Nhat Hanh has traveled the world, including the US, for decades spreading Buddhist wisdom, such as mindfulness, and advocating peace. After many years of experience with mindfulness and meditation as well as participating in retreats led by Thich Nhat Hanh, Jon Kabat-Zinn, an American doctor, created the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR), an eight-week course meant to treat a wide range of conditions (particularly stress) through the use of mindfulness. That was in 1979, and since then the MBSR program has spread throughout the United States and made mindfulness the target of literally hundreds of scientific studies.

But it's the exceptional results of these scientific studies that are what have really convinced so many professional institutions to adopt the practice of mindfulness. In the modern world, when science gets behind something, people take notice. And that's just what happened. After the first few studies were released mindfulness began spreading like wildfire. The only criticism that's been given of this movement is in the fact that many are adopting mindfulness as a way to become more productive and efficient at their jobs as opposed to the original purpose of mindfulness as a tool for discovering one's true nature and becoming happy and at peace. This is undoubtedly misguided, but something I see us becoming conscious, or mindful, of in the near future. This is only the beginning of a more conscious existence for the world at large. There's no telling just how far and wide mindfulness and the realization of the importance of living more consciously will spread. The reason it's being adopted by certain people and institutions may not be completely pure. But one thing is for certain: by living with mindfulness we'll be guided towards a happier, more peaceful, and overall better existence for ourselves and for those around us. It just might take us a while to realize that this is really what we're searching for.

Mindfulness is…

What exactly *is* mindfulness? In a nutshell, mindfulness can be defined as ***the complete and nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment.*** It's also been defined as "the moment to moment awareness of present events". In fact, it's been defined dozens, if not hundreds, of times and most of those definitions suffice. There's no one agreed upon way of defining mindfulness. This is because mindfulness is a state of being beyond words or concepts. One must practice mindfulness in order to truly understand what mindfulness is. As I mentioned in the last chapter, the origin of the word mindfulness is in the Pali word "sati", and its Sanskrit counterpart "smrti", which both literally mean "memory". But perhaps more precisely they represent "presence of mind" or "attentiveness to the present". This is what the Buddha was referring to when he said, "When we sit, *we know* we are sitting. When we walk, *we know* we are walking. When we eat, *we know* we are eating." He meant that when he and his disciples sat, walked, or ate they were fully present for the act of sitting, walking, or eating.

Even when becoming lost in thought, while practicing mindfulness the practitioner is fully aware that they just became lost in a particular thought and are mindful of the thought itself. This is because mindfulness isn't just mindfulness of an object in the present moment such as one's breath, steps, or food. It's also mindfulness of anything which might arise in the present moment while concentrating on an object. In a way, mindfulness is the *observer of change*. While concentrating on the object of meditation, such as one's breath or steps, we become distracted by thoughts, feelings, and other sensations. These are "changes" in the field of mindfulness, the area which mindfulness observes. In this way think of mindfulness as a motion detector. If nothing moves, if nothing changes, then nothing is detected. Mindfulness is still there observing, just as the motion detector which detects no motion is still there observing its area of detection, but until a thought, feeling, or some other sensation arises the practitioner just continues to concentrate on the object of meditation. When this happens is when the real work begins.

Mindfulness is the complete and nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment.

Think of mindfulness as a "field of attention" with a point of concentration in the center acting as an anchor to the present, rather than just a pointed concentration on something while pushing away everything else around you. Imagine a dream catcher. The idea behind a dream catcher is it's supposed to "catch" your bad dreams as you're sleeping. Just as a dream catcher catches your bad dreams, imagine each thought, feeling, and sensation being caught by your "field of mindfulness". Except in this case, you don't label any thought, feeling, or sensation either good or bad. While in mindfulness, each thought, feeling, and sensation that arises automatically enters into this field of mindfulness and, this is the important part, is gently acknowledged and accepted "as it is". By "as it is" I mean without judging it in any way. If this is hard to imagine, don't worry. For the most part this nonjudgmental awareness happens naturally when you practice mindfulness correctly. The important thing to remember for now is that mindfulness is not a rejection of anything.

Mindfulness is an open acceptance of everything that comes into your awareness. If you're practicing mindful breathing, don't reject thoughts that come into your mind just because they interrupt your mindful breathing. Observing these thoughts, which are typically unnoticed but always dispersing our awareness and coloring our perception, is a major part of practicing mindfulness. So this is perfectly fine. Simply acknowledge the thought in mindfulness, just as you were doing with your breath, and then let the thought pass. Then bring your focus *back to your breath*. As time goes on your ability to concentrate on one point for a period of time as well as your ability to detect things with your mindfulness will improve. And with it, the quality of your mindfulness practice will improve as well.

Mindfulness has a number of different "qualities". If you break mindfulness down based on these qualities it becomes much easier to understand it as a whole. We've covered the basic workings of mindfulness so far, but in order to gain a deeper understanding of mindfulness let's break it down and look at each quality individually. There's 6 key aspects of mindfulness which I'll cover below.

Mindfulness is…

1. Mindfulness *of something*

Mindfulness is always mindfulness *of something*. It's not just a conscious directing of your awareness to the present moment, it's a conscious directing of your awareness to *something* which is occurring or existing in the present moment. Common centers of focus are your breath, steps, or some other area or areas of the body. Concentration, or samadhi in Sanskrit, is a force which works in tandem with mindfulness. Concentration is "single-pointedness of mind" and it's just that- the act of focusing on a single point.

While practicing mindfulness you will be developing your power of concentration as well as your mindfulness. There is no separating mindfulness and concentration. They're partners on the path to attaining a tranquil and clear mind. Think of concentration as the "hard" force and mindfulness as the "soft". Concentration is exactly what it sounds like, it's the forceful act of focusing on a single point. Imagine your field of mindfulness enveloping everything within your perception in a soft glow. Next, imagine a thin line piercing out from your mindfulness directly to an object. This is your concentration. Mindfulness, on the other hand, is a sort of soft awareness. Remember the dream catcher? Mindfulness is the field of awareness which then "sees" everything that arises while concentrating on an object. Mindfulness is what notices when your concentration lapses and your thoughts stray. Think of mindfulness as the ultimate, voiceless, and nonjudgmental observer. It judges nothing. It makes no distinctions. It simply observes everything that comes into its field of awareness. Your concentration, the force anchoring your mindfulness to some object in the present moment (the object of meditation), is the instrument of mindfulness. Mindfulness decides where the point of concentration will be. It observes the anchor point (the point of your concentration), notices when concentration strays, and where it strays to. This might be difficult to imagine at first, but for now just know that the act of practicing mindfulness will feel much like concentrating on an object, such as your breathing, and then doing your best to notice or acknowledge when your thoughts stray.

Just being able to acknowledge when your thoughts stray will take some time. In the beginning, your practice will look and feel like this: 1) concentrate on your breath, 2) lose concentration, sometimes aware of the thought or feeling you strayed to, most of the time not, 3) back to concentrating on your breathing. That's it. But after a while you'll begin to notice these thoughts and feelings more often, more clearly, and that will allow you to acknowledge them with your mindfulness.

2. **Mindfulness of something *in the present moment***

Moving on from the last point, mindfulness is always mindfulness of something *in the present moment*. But it doesn't have to be something existing in the physical world. As we spoke about earlier, that can be mindfulness of a thought that arises in the present moment while concentrating on your breath, body, or some other object. What mindfulness *isn't* is reflecting on the past or thinking about the future. When reflecting on the past or thinking about the future you're consciously directing your attention to the past, future, or some altogether imagined place. Therefore it's not something which exists in the present moment.

Mindfulness is always the observing of what is occurring *in the present moment*.

As we go about our daily lives, we often don't notice how our perception, or mental filters, such as bias affect how we see the world around us. And we think that what we're thinking and seeing with our eyes are two different things. But they aren't. What we see with our eyes passes through our perception before we even realize we see the object. It's like we have an internal check point which we've built up from our life experiences. And this check point has, over the years, gotten filled with both good and bad things which "color" our perception and affect our experiences. In this way, you and your mindfulness are like the house cleaners come to clean up this internal check point and empty it of all those things keeping you from experiencing reality in its true form.

Imagine someone offers you a piece of food which you've never tried before. This food somewhat resembles, say, Brussels sprouts (bleh!). As soon as you lay eyes on it you have a negative sensation. Maybe you get a bad taste in your mouth, your body cringes a little, and a bad memory of eating Brussels sprouts flashes into your mind. This new food item could be amazing. You have no idea if it is or isn't. You've never actually tried it. But your perception has already completely colored your experience to the point where it can even affect how it will taste.

This is an example of how our perception colors everything around us. Everything you perceive *is your mind*. You might think you're observing your breath, a Brussels sprout, or a flower. But what you're really observing is *your perception* of those things. Mindfulness is about observing what is occurring in the present moment so that you can pierce through your wrong perceptions to witness reality as it is without any mental filters getting in the way. This is why mindfulness is mindfulness of something in the present moment. The point of mindfulness is to experience reality as it is, allowing you to touch the true peace and joy of each moment.

3. **A *conscious decision***

Mindfulness is a purposeful directing of your consciousness to the present, it doesn't happen on accident. To be fully awake to the present moment you have to decide "I am fully awake to this moment" by directing your consciousness to an object in the present moment. You decide to be mindful in any given moment. It doesn't happen by accident.

I mentioned earlier how the point of your concentration, or object of meditation, works as your anchor point to the present moment. The starting point for the anchor and the eventual anchor point is this conscious decision. Think of mindfulness as a ship and you're the captain. You make the conscious decision to place the anchor down and where to place it. You then throw the anchor, your concentration, off the ship. The anchor then hits the intended anchor point, or object of meditation, where it will rest. Of course at first this anchor won't be very strong. It will be made of, say, plastic. Not a very good anchor. But with time it will develop into a heavy and resilient anchor.

4. ***Nonjudgmental*** **awareness**

All spiritual practice in an overall sense is about finding true peace and happiness through accomplishing total liberation (or freedom) from the various factors that hold us back. And so we become liberated by discovering the truth. That is, by uncovering all those things which cloud our vision. *This is the ultimate purpose of mindfulness*. It's this nonjudgmental awareness that makes mindfulness so important in finding true peace and happiness.

Mindfulness accepts everything as it is. As I mentioned earlier it makes no distinctions, holds no bias, and is completely separated from all mental filters which distort your perception of reality. Mindfulness allows you to experience true reality. This is liberation. And as I also mentioned earlier, if you're not sure how to do this at first then don't worry. Mindfulness is itself nonjudgmental. It's helpful to keep this point in mind at times, but you'll find this will happen somewhat naturally. If you sense bias or get the feeling that you're somehow coloring your perception of something while practicing then this is a good thing. Simply by noticing this it means you're becoming mindful of your various mental filters. If this happens, know that you're on the right path. As always, simply acknowledge it and bring yourself back to your object of meditation. It's not wrong that you lose your concentration. What's wrong is not observing the distraction with mindfulness.

5. Developed *like a muscle*

Mindfulness works like a muscle. At the beginning your energy of mindfulness will be very weak. But over time your mindfulness will strengthen and you'll notice a significant difference both in your ability to concentrate and in your ability to see with mindfulness. This is important to know at the beginning because it's at the very beginning stages where things are most difficult. While trying to establish the practice of mindfulness as a part of your life you'll be constantly fighting old habits. In Buddhism, this is sometimes called "habit energy". Imagine everything you do carries with it a certain energy. The more you do something the more energy it develops, and with it, the more "pull" it has.

You can develop energy anywhere in your life, in both positive and negative places. So when starting out don't become discouraged when you're having a hard time sticking to your mindfulness practice, such as when you forget to practice for an entire day altogether. I went through this constantly at first and it's just going to be a battle. There's no two ways about it. Part 3 is all about helping you develop mindfulness in your daily life and it includes some great tips and tricks, all of which I've used to develop my own mindfulness practice.

6. **Like turning on the "HD" switch to your life**

Most of the time, without us even knowing it, our consciousness is split in many directions. It's split between various sensations in the present moment and various thoughts in our mind. When sitting at your computer at work, for instance, you could be typing up an email, but really, you're typing up the email while semi-listening to two people talk a few feet away from you, noticing how cold you are, thinking about that episode of Lost you watched last night, and thinking about the fact that you feel like you're gaining some weight. That's really what the "present moment" looks and feels like for most of us: our consciousness, bouncing constantly from one place to another. As you begin practicing mindfulness, you'll start to observe this very behavior for yourself. This bouncing around makes us live in a way to where we're only half-awake to anything that occurs around us. Let's call this life in "standard-definition". More on this in a bit.

The last point I'd like to cover in this chapter is that it's important for you to know what mindfulness *feels* like. I can put as many words as I'd like on a page describing how it works, how to do it, the benefits of doing it, and you could read it all, but if I don't clearly explain how you'll feel while truly being mindful then you won't have much more than a guess at whether or not you're really practicing mindfulness properly or not. So what does mindfulness *feel* like? In a few words…it feels like turning on the "HD" (High-Definition) switch to your life. By that I mean that the moment you make the conscious decision "I'm now fully aware of what I'm doing and what's happening to me in the present moment" you should feel as though you've come alive. As though, before you made that conscious decision and "activated" your mindfulness, you were half-asleep. You'll notice things you never noticed before and everything around you will be magnified.

Don't expect the feeling to be that intense at first though. When you first start practicing the feeling will be subtle, which is all the more reason why one of the first mindfulness practices you adopt should be mindful sitting (traditionally just called sitting meditation, which we'll cover in Part 2). While sitting quietly in mindfulness you'll make the greatest progress towards improving your concentration and developing your mindfulness, as opposed to doing a more difficult activity before you've really developed your skill level. This is because you'll have fewer distractions and will be able to "hone in" on the feeling I described in the last chapter better. Once you've developed your mindfulness though it will be highly beneficial to practice mindfulness of more difficult tasks in order to develop your skill.

One last note. Even if you're just beginning with mindfulness, while you might not be able to tell exactly what thoughts arise in your mind, you should still begin noticing these distractions as they arise. Simply noticing that some sort of distraction just arose in your mind is the second feeling you should look out for, even if at first you don't know what the thoughts or feelings are exactly. Take these two feelings described together and you'll have a much clearer picture of what mindfulness should feel like. Use the information I described in this point to guide your practice in the beginning.

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Breaking down mindfulness into parts helps us understand how it works. But we need to make sure not to make the mistake of actually thinking of mindfulness as a bunch of separate things. Mindfulness is one thing: ***a complete and nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment.*** It's the conscious act of bringing one's complete awareness into the present reality, which allows us to see the world in a way we've never seen it before-beyond our wrong perceptions (and perception itself), preconceived notions, deep-seated emotions, and beyond the ego. Seeing reality in its purest state, filled with a limitless peace, joy, and freedom.

> *The moment you make the conscious decision "I am going to be fully aware of what I'm doing here and what's happening to me in the present moment" you should feel as though you've come alive. As though, before you made that conscious decision and "activated" your mindfulness, you were half-asleep.*

FAQ 1: What's the difference between mindfulness and meditation?

At this point you might be wondering: what exactly is the difference between mindfulness and meditation? **Mindfulness is itself a form of meditation.** One of various forms of meditation. Which is why, as you might have noticed, the word meditation has been used in place of, or alongside, mindfulness at various points in the book thus far. There's just certain more traditional ways of referring to different types of mindfulness practices which can often make things confusing for a beginner.

Mindful sitting is traditionally called sitting meditation, simply meditation, or more recently mindfulness meditation. Mindful walking is traditionally called walking meditation, not mindful walking. Things like this can make it confusing for someone just starting out, especially someone who's learning on their own without the guidance of a formal teacher, which is common in the age of the internet.

So, if mindfulness is a form of meditation, what exactly is meditation? Meditation covers a pretty broad spectrum of techniques. But there is a central theme. All meditation has to do with developing the mind. In a nutshell, meditation is **a mental technique used to develop or maintain the mind.** Like mindfulness, meditation can be defined in a number of ways. What's important is just that you get the general idea. Your true understanding of meditation will come when you actually begin to meditate.

Mindfulness isn't…

We live in an age where communication is instantaneous, whether across the globe or right next door, and just about anyone with an internet connection can access a limitless amount of information on any subject that's ever existed. It's a beautiful and interesting time to be alive. We have the ability to do so many positive things with this new connected world. But it's also because of this, combined with mindfulness' quick adoption in the West, that quite a few misconceptions about what mindfulness is have cropped up. People have begun jumping on mindfulness like a bandwagon, using it as a tool for nothing more than increased productivity and a little stress reduction. This is greatly limiting its full capability. On top of this, or perhaps because of this, many incorrect or dubious explanations of *how* to practice mindfulness have cropped up as well.

But there's more to it than just that. Mindfulness itself can be confusing if not explained clearly and thoroughly (and ultimately, experienced personally). To the beginner it can sound like a simple paying attention to something in the present moment. And that is, in large part, what mindfulness is. But there's more to it. And if what it is and how to practice it isn't clearly explained then you can end up wasting an inordinate amount of time in the beginning. Visual examples, like the ship, the ship's captain and the anchor example in the previous chapter, can really help one get a basic understanding. But actual practice also needs to be stressed. Mindfulness isn't a blog post, it's an activity.

In this chapter, I hope to clear up a few important misconceptions about mindfulness as a whole in order to save you time and improve the quality of your mindfulness practice right from the get-go. Here I'll be covering more than just things that have to do with exact functions of mindfulness, as opposed to the last chapter, I'll also be covering common misconceptions about mindfulness as I mentioned above.

Mindfulness isn't…

1. **A tool for productivity**

This is a major mistake of the West's adoption of mindfulness. There isn't anything necessarily wrong with using mindfulness in order to be more effective or productive. But the purpose of the West's mass adoption of mindfulness has been almost exclusively as a tool for increased productivity and effectiveness. This isn't good. It's being used towards our obsession over productivity, which itself is misguided. Sure, if everyone starts becoming mindful all day long in order to be more productive it's not the worst thing in the world. But adopting mindfulness to serve our obsession with productivity would be a grave misuse of this powerful tool which can completely change one's life. Mindfulness is to be used to improve your well-being, not feed your ego. It can calm and quiet the restless mind, help one obtain complete rest, uncover deep-seated negative emotions and limiting beliefs and help heal them, erase wrong perceptions in order to bring a greater sense of peace and happiness to ourselves and those around us, and ultimately, to take us beyond all perception to experience our true nature. In the West we need to discover the practice of "right mindfulness". If we can do this, we can make great use of the growing exposure of this amazing spiritual tool.

2. **Only a form of sitting meditation**

In the West, mindfulness is often misunderstood by some as simply a form of sitting meditation and nothing else. When someone says they practice mindfulness they likely only practice it for 15-20 minutes in the morning once a day in the form of mindful sitting (also called sitting meditation). This is great. Better than not doing any meditation at all. But mindfulness is far more than just a form of sitting meditation. It's a meditation technique which can and should be used throughout the day. You should strive to live each waking moment in mindfulness.

As I spoke about earlier, mindfulness is like life in HD. You know that feeling when you look at a standard definition television and then immediately look over at a high definition one? Mindfulness is like that. You see a whole slew of things throughout your day that you never noticed before. I don't necessarily mean you notice beautiful scenery more often though, although this does happen, I mean that when you turn your mindfulness "switch" on you immediately feel different. You feel completely….alive. There's really no other way to describe it. Don't starve your spiritual or personal practice by simply using mindfulness as a form of sitting meditation. Discover the true power and beauty of mindfulness by using it during your everyday life.

3. **Simply paying close attention or strongly focusing**

It's difficult at first to fully grasp what mindfulness is. At first it will probably be difficult to understand just how it differs from simple paying close attention to or strongly focusing on something. This is a natural misunderstanding. Remember, mindfulness is like a soft focus. It's the quiet observer which sits atop one's concentration observing everything. Concentration is what creates the vantage point for mindfulness. Without it, there is no point with which to reliably observe reality.

4. **Difficult**

By this I mean two things: mindfulness isn't difficult to learn and mindfulness isn't difficult to practice. First, the act of being mindful shouldn't feel like you're straining your eyeballs. You shouldn't feel like you're going to give yourself a headache. The soft focus example doesn't just serve to explain the function of mindfulness, it also explains the feeling of being mindful.

Mindfulness feels like a soft focus as opposed to a hard one that hurts your head. You should feel absolutely no strain in your head, cringing in your face, or tension in your mind. Mindfulness should feel effortless and be enjoyable. You should look forward to practicing mindfulness because you know you'll feel truly alive when doing so.

Secondly, it's not difficult to learn mindfulness. There's just a lot of bad explanations on how to practice it (whether intentional or not). And to some extent, you just have to get out there and practice in order to learn. Nowadays, if you type "mindfulness" into Google you'll get literally millions of results. Everyone's talking about it and, you guessed it, everyone thinks they know what it is and how to teach it with little experience. Again, it doesn't take an expert to be able to understand and explain mindfulness clearly. But many people are just trying to use the popularity of mindfulness to attract readers or viewers and in reality know very little about it. Use careful scrutiny in deciding who to listen to for advice on developing your mindfulness practice. You'll hear me say this a few times. That's because it's so important.

5. **Religious**

I've seen a lot of particularly academic sources explaining mindfulness in a way that it was once a technique attached to a religion or a system of philosophy (Buddhism), but that scientists have now adapted a "non-secular" version of it. Don't let this confuse you. Mindfulness is mindfulness. No one can make it religious or non-religious or anything else. And anyone who describes mindfulness in this way has a very limited understanding of its purpose as well as its origin.

Buddhism in and of itself is about discovering the truth of this world, including yourself, through your own direct experience. The Buddha taught his disciples not to follow his teachings on blind faith. He insisted they closely examine and scrutinize everything, even his own teachings, in order to discover their validity. And with it, the truth. And to that end *mindfulness* *is one's master tool.* It allows the practitioner to shine a "light" so to speak on their lives in order to discover the true nature of themselves and the world around them. It's like a scientist using a magnifying glass to view a sample. The scientist views that sample in order to find something which hasn't yet been noticed and to ultimately gain a better understanding of what's being viewed and eventually contribute to improving life in some way with this knowledge. Mindfulness is your magnifying glass. It allows you to see things you wouldn't otherwise be able to see without it and ultimately gain a better understanding of everything around you. Specifically, from the vantage point of yourself. The wise, including the Buddha, long ago learned that if you work to understand the self you inadvertently gain a deeper understanding of the world around you. Buddhists practice mindfulness. But Buddhism is simply the practice of discovering and living true peace and happiness. And mindfulness itself is simply the practice of being truly alive. Understand that when you practice mindfulness, *you practice the art of living deeply as a living being*. Nothing more is necessary. This can be called Buddhism and it can be called striving to live life fully in the peace of the present moment. They're one in the same.

6. **Only for certain people**

Mindfulness isn't something that works for some people and doesn't for others. Don't look at mindfulness as an activity like dancing, sports, drawing, or the like. Think of it as a fundamental activity used to nourish the mind and body like eating, drinking, exercising, and sleeping. Mindfulness is a universal technique that anyone and everyone can use to improve the quality of their lives. Don't limit yourself by holding on to the wrong view that spiritual practice, in this case mindfulness, is only for certain people. It doesn't matter whether you really love practicing mindful walking, mindful drawing, or rather do something else in mindfulness altogether, the practice of mindfulness is for everyone. Children and adults, doctors and lawyers, teachers and business men or women, fathers and mothers, and everyone in between.

I bring this up because I've seen this reason used many times as an excuse for not pushing through the initial difficulty of learning to do something, including mindfulness. We often give up too soon after trying something new and convince ourselves either that we're just not good at it or that it "isn't for us". You wouldn't say that sleeping isn't for you, right? Think of mindfulness and meditation in the same way. Think of it as a necessary component for nourishing the mind and body that's available to everyone.

7. **Something you do sometimes**

Mindfulness isn't something you do sometimes. It isn't something you do only when you're feeling particularly stressed or anxious. There's a growing misconception that mindfulness is simply a tool for reducing stress. Stress is a real problem in today's world. Mindfulness' ability to not just reduce but completely remove stress altogether is of great benefit to a lot of people especially in fast-paced professional environments. This is really amazing. But to use mindfulness solely as a tool that's to be used sometimes when you're feeling stressed is another great misuse of this incredible tool.

At first, it will be extremely difficult to do more than meditate once or twice a day and maybe practice some mindful breathing every few hours for a minute or two. But after a while though, with the right energy put into your practice, you'll develop the ability to be mindful far more often. During basic activities like walking to and from your car at work, sweeping the floor, doing the dishes, and even driving. It's possible to be mindful every waking hour, and this is exactly what you should strive for.

And don't think you have to do things slower while in mindfulness. This is another common misconception. Once you've developed your ability you don't have to do things any slower than you usually would without mindfulness, so with practice it's very possible to be mindful all day long and get the same amount done (but in reality, you'll be *more* productive). If you strive to be mindful *throughout* each day you'll obtain the greatest benefits by far.

When you practice mindfulness, you practice the art of living deeply as a living being.

FAQ 2: How exactly is slowing down and taking time to do something completely unrelated to my work supposed to make me more productive?

While productivity isn't the point of mindfulness or life in general, and before anything this should be realized, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter there's nothing necessarily wrong with wanting to be more productive. You just need to understand that there are times and ways that productivity is helpful (positive productivity) and other times and ways that it's harmful (negative productivity). If you figure out how you can get your work done in a third of the time that it used to take you and that allows you to get home to your kids faster each day, that's *positive productivity*. If you decide to start taking your work home and instead of playing with your son you work at the kitchen table all night while your son sits and plays by himself, this is *negative productivity*.

Another example would be that if you decided to stop taking your lunch break in order to get an extra half-hour or hour of work in each day, and consequently never even slightly rest your mind during your average work day, this would be negative productivity because it will actually hinder your performance more than that half-hour or hour of extra work could ever make up for. But worst of all, by doing so you hurt your overall mental well-being. On the other hand, if you were to decide to take part of your half-hour or hour lunch each day and practice mindful sitting for 15-20 minutes, this would be positive productivity. By doing so you'd be giving your mind the best rest it could get in the middle of a work day by completely taking your mind away from work for an extended period of time. This will greatly improve your performance. But best of all, it increases your overall mental well-being.

Positive productivity improves the well-being of yourself and those around you. This can include things that don't have anything to do with your work but instead make you more efficient. By taking a break to do something which will make you sharper, more alert, more optimistic, and/or more energetic you increase your effectiveness, and therefore productivity, in any given task tenfold. Negative productivity harms the well-being of yourself and those around you. Negative productivity often just makes us *feel* more productive and either doesn't make us more productive at all or actually hurts our productivity. If you use these as your guiding principles towards productivity you're sure to become maximally productive while simultaneously improving instead of harming your well-being.

I completely understand the productivity junkie mentality because I was that guy too. I didn't understand the point of doing something completely unrelated to my work or how that could actually make me more productive. I was the epitome of a productivity junkie. Everything I did that I felt wasn't naturally productive towards my work I tried to do at the same time as something that was. When I did work I tried to be as quick as possible and was constantly looking for ways to squeeze more time out of each day to get more work done.

It turns out none of those things make you all that more productive. In fact, they can make you far less productive. But when you allow your mind to step away for a period of time from something that's been sitting in your mind and truly rest, you'll notice yourself as being far more creative, effective, and therefore productive when coming back to it. It's just the way the mind works, there's nothing more to it. We need rest. It's completely unhealthy for us to stay on any task for an extended period of time with no rest. A great guiding principle would be to use your mindfulness itself to keep tabs on the condition of your mind while working. If you're trying out things that can make you more productive, but feel your mind becoming stressed as a result of these things, it's probably a good idea to stop doing them.

Finding Peace Within

So, now you have a general understanding of what mindfulness is. But why practice mindfulness? What's so important about being mindful? Knowing how mindfulness works is only part of what constitutes a complete understanding of mindfulness. In the last few chapters, I covered briefly some of the reasons why you should practice mindfulness. In this chapter, I'll expand on what I mentioned there and show you why mindfulness is the key to finding true peace and happiness.

All spiritual practice can be broken down into obtaining and maintaining two states: 1) a calm mind, and 2) a clear mind. In Buddhism, these two states are generally referred to by their Pali/Sanskrit terms depending on the Buddhist lineage. The first state, samatha, is a state of tranquility or calmness of mind. And the second, vipassana, is a state of awakening or clarity of mind. The first state, samatha, is typically translated as "stopping" (referring to the mind). Samatha is the process of stopping, calming, fully resting, and healing the mind. The growing popularity of mindfulness as a way to "manage" one's emotions and reduce stress comes from the samatha side of the equation.

Samatha, which moving forward I'll refer to as tranquility or calmness of mind, is the necessary basis for the second stage, vipassana, which refers to seeing deeply or with clarity. The English equivalent of vipassana is "insight", and it's the word typically associated with vipassana. Insight is *wisdom gained through direct experience*, and insight into the "true nature of reality" is what vipassana is all about (moving forward I'll refer to vipassana as insight or clarity of mind). You're likely familiar with the concept of "learning from experience". You know, the idea that, say, reading something in a book and "knowing" it is different from experiencing it yourself. You might have read ten books on true love and think you know all about it, but until you actually experience true love for yourself you don't really know true love. That's insight. In the case of spiritual practice though this direct experience is typically a direct experience of the "ultimate reality". This ultimate reality goes by many names: the ultimate or absolute dimension, the ground of being, or even God, depending on your interpretation. But we'll get more into that in the next chapter.

Likewise, the "benefits", or purpose, of mindfulness can be separated based on these two states as well. Which brings us to the topic of this chapter: the first "power" of mindfulness. The first power of mindfulness is **the ability to help one obtain a tranquil, or calm, mind (samatha).**

A tranquil mind is the very foundation of spiritual practice. Without it, we wouldn't be able to obtain awakening, the state of complete liberation and true happiness. How does mindfulness help us attain a tranquil mind? The process can be broken down into four components: stopping, calming, fully resting, and healing.

Stopping

Obtaining a tranquil mind, the practice of samatha, is ultimately about stopping. We need to learn how to stop. At first this might seem silly, "I'm sitting while I'm reading this book. I'm stopping!" But it's not so simple. By stopping I mean we need to stop both body and mind. A mind at rest is a peaceful mind. So we need to learn how to fully stop and let our minds calm. By doing so we bring us back to ourselves. This is called the practice of "going home", and it's the practice of going home to ourselves by reuniting mind and body. The practice of mindful breathing does just that- it allows us to reunite mind and body as they're truly meant to be. This is important because the way we typically live our lives, both mind and body are almost always separated.

Mindfulness is in opposition to the way we usually live our lives. That is, halfway in our heads, bouncing around in an endless stream of thoughts, and halfway in the present moment, only partially awake to what we're doing. This state of semi-consciousness, or mind dispersion, is a state where we're unable to attain complete rest and our minds are perpetually clouded.

This semi-conscious state, or mind dispersion, is what the Buddha often referred to as our “monkey mind”. Our monkey mind is constantly bouncing from one thought to another. We’re doing one thing (body) but thinking about another (mind). We’re driving home from work while we’re thinking about work, and then bills, and then dinner, and then that dinner date with your old friend coming up, and then your daughter’s school project, and then whatever happened to your favorite band because they seemed to drop off the map, and then “When was that TV special again?”, and then work, oh and then that sounds good for dinner, and then you look in your overhead mirror and think “I look tired today”, and then a Sit-And-Sleep commercial for some reason pops into your head and so you start thinking about how you really should get a new mattress soon, and then you think about home again and how the day is passing so quickly, and then, and then, and then…it never ends. That is, unless you work to calm the mind.

Mindfulness delicately brings the mind to rest and reunites body and mind as one force. When you walk to work you’re walking to work and you’re enjoying the walk with all of your being. You’re not thinking about what’s for dinner or what you’ll say to your boss about that project when you get into the office while walking. Your body is walking and your mind is walking. When you drive home you know you’re driving. You’re not letting yourself be distracted by the passing billboard advertisements or thinking about your overdue bills. You’re truly enjoying the drive home in peace and quiet. When you’re sitting down to play with your children you’re fully present for them, giving them your complete and undivided attention. When you live with mindfulness you’re able to truly appreciate the presence of your loved ones.

This state of mind dispersion does more than just make us stressed and take us away from our loved ones. On top of heightening stress and anxiety it decreases our productivity, restrains our creativity, disconnects us from the world around us, and overall makes us less happy. Instead of being at peace, our minds are in chaos. And as long as our attention is dispersed this monkey will rear its mischievous little head. The only way to stop our monkey mind is with mindfulness. Mindfulness gives us the ability to stop our monkey minds. Once we learn how to do this, the process of calming the mind, obtaining complete rest, and healing comes naturally. This is because, in reality, there's no separating the four components of a tranquil mind (samatha) as you'll see in the next few sections.

Calming

By living in the present moment with mindfulness we're able to bring our mind into a state of deep calm. A natural byproduct of learning how to stop the mind and body and simply be fully present, such as for the act of following one's breath, is a calm mind. Indeed, the opposite of our monkey mind is a calm mind.

Calming the mind is a process though. It doesn't happen all at once. We build up a lot of stress and tension in our everyday lives and it takes some time to fully calm the mind, especially assuming your current life doesn't just stop when you begin practicing mindfulness (which it doesn't!). You'll still have the same headaches and stressors as before and so you'll need to calm the mind despite these things constantly getting in the way. Of course, this is a two sided problem. You might need to reevaluate why you do certain things which are causing you stress. But your focus should always be on your practice of mindfulness. By making the act of stopping a priority and seeking to live your life fully in the present moment, cherishing every moment of life, you'll naturally begin to calm the mind.

Resting

Nowadays, we're so productivity focused we even map out our vacations. A checklist for a vacation? Yeah, we've lost our way. We live off checklists and to-do lists at work and at home. We think the more things we check off our list the better we'll feel. We don't even notice it but what we're chasing is peace. We're hoping for just a little slice of it here and there, even if it's temporary. But we don’t have to settle for these temporary states of peace, we can have the whole pie. Indeed, if we could only learn how to truly come in touch with it we’d see that this pie is limitless.

We need to learn how to attain complete rest. By complete rest I’m referring to a fully rested mind and body. A state which most of us rarely if ever feel. And a full night’s sleep doesn’t provide this for us either. We’re tossing, turning, and bending our bodies in uncomfortable positions which lead to aches and pains. To add to that we’re dreaming constantly. And the more your mind is racing when you go to bed, the more it will be racing in your dreams when you go to sleep. Worst of all though, our sleep can be interrupted (especially if you have kids!). That really sets us off. Then there’s the fact that sleep primarily rests the body and does very little for our monkey minds. The second we wake up, we’re right back in the jungle.

Mindfulness, particularly sitting meditation, allows us to attain this state of complete rest. It gives our minds the rest it needs. My favorite example is the image of a pebble slowly falling to the ocean floor. Imagine your mind is the pebble. The longer you meditate, the deeper the pebble sinks. And the deeper the pebble sinks, the more calm and peaceful your mind becomes. Meditate until you feel your mind reach the ocean floor. Imagine your body slowly sinking just like the pebble. Then simply sit there for however long you’d like. Be fully present for this state of absolute calm. This is what tranquility feels like. This is true rest.

If we can learn how to rest in this way we give ourselves the ability to overcome so much. Without a doubt, one of the major reasons we experience so much stress and anxiety in modern life is because we don’t know how to attain complete rest.

Healing

This last section is about learning how to utilize the body’s natural healing ability. In order to attain a tranquil mind, it’s not enough to stop, calm, and completely rest the body. These are key aspects of achieving a tranquil mind. But if we don’t know how to heal our mind and body then we'll have no chance of attaining a calm mind.

Our mind and body comes equipped with a natural healing ability. We've all but forgotten about it, living in an age of advanced medicine, thousands of both over-the-counter and subscription medicines, and a whole roster of mental and physical professionals all ready to help us heal our mental and physical wounds. It's because of this that we now grossly underestimate our own ability to heal.

We've forgotten that the only thing necessary in order to heal is to *be with* that which needs to be healed. My favorite example of this is from Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh. He often speaks of how, when injured, an animal's natural instinct is to find somewhere safe and quiet to lie and rest. This is what it means to *be with* an illness, whether mental or physical. By stopping all activity the animal conserves every ounce of energy. This puts all of their being into the process of healing. You can do this yourself to heal both mental and physical illness.

What is a mental illness? In the case of the mind, this could be a deep-seated negative emotion or limiting belief. Maybe you hold a deep sense of resentment, and maybe even anger, towards your spouse. Years ago, when you first started dating, things were great. You were both young and you had the entire world at your fingertips. You had fun and generally lived life with wild abandon. But years later you become married, have children, and gain multiple responsibilities. Now you feel as if the entire world has closed in around you. You feel like all the opportunity and possibilities that were once at your fingertips are all but gone, never to return. Because of this, you now resent your spouse. You see them as the very source of your suffering. They didn't necessarily do anything wrong, but you created these "mental formations" of resentment and anger and labelled them the cause. This is an example of a very deep-seated emotion which needs to be overcome in order to achieve tranquility.

In order to heal this and any other form of deep-seated emotion you need to sit in meditation and simply be with the emotion. When mindful, you awaken and see through all illusions. Your limiting beliefs rise to the surface. This allows your body and mind's natural healing process to take effect. You simply need to care for the emotion. Tend to it. Accept it fully with compassion. Much of our suffering comes from our tendency to bottle up emotions and ignore them, thinking that if we do they'll go away. But this never happens. Neglect won't heal your wounds. You need to face these emotions with your mindfulness and self-compassion. Know that you're human and everyone has emotions such as these. Accept it fully with your mindfulness and it will subside. This is our natural healing ability and anyone can utilize this with practice.

As you can see, there's really no separating these four areas from each other. Stopping and calming essentially always happen simultaneously to some extent, resting involves stopping, calming, healing can really be considered a form of resting (or vice versa), and all four can be a part of one single mindfulness practice.

Finding Peace in the Age of Distraction

Distraction is a force which takes our already dispersed attention and splits it into a million different strings. It brings our monkey mind to a whole new level. This was already touched on in the section on "Stopping", but our modern world warrants extra focus on this particular point. If it wasn't enough that our minds are already naturally inclined to this semi-conscious and stress induced state, the modern era has brought us many of the worst sources for distraction all within a matter of decades.

These distractions, which are the substance of our monkey mind, are always within arm's reach in our modern world. Smartphones are in our pockets, desktops are at our place of work, and TVs are in our homes. It's so easy to distract ourselves from reality. But if we can bring our attention back to the present moment with mindfulness we have the ability to attain both a tranquil mind and clear vision.

This is the reason mindfulness is so attractive to us. Our modern world is plugged in 24/7 and it's difficult to get away from these distractions even if you make an effort. More than ever it's so easy to live in a mindless and disconnected state of being. Most of us are rarely fully present. We live in a state of perpetual distraction. We live the majority of our lives in one place while thinking of another. We're at work but we're thinking about what to make for dinner tonight at home. We're at home thinking about that project we have to finish at work. We're enjoying eating out with our family but we're really inside of our heads, stressing about the bills we have to pay next month. We all think this is normal. That it's OK. But it's not. This mind dispersion is the cause of much of our suffering and discontent.

After a tough day, one where you've been rushing around constantly and inevitably forgotten to take time for yourself, your mind will naturally be more active. If you sit down to meditate during this time you'll see that your mind is literally like a firecracker. It will be very difficult to keep the mind in one place for more than a few seconds. In this situation the mind will often be distracted over nothing special. It's still racing because it's conditioned to you racing around, not because there's anything particular going on in your consciousness. Mindfulness of these distractions won't lead to any great liberation. This is simply a sign that you need to slow things down. If your life continues as is, it will be very difficult to attain complete rest and fully quiet the mind. And if you can't calm the mind you certainly won't be able to get to the point where you can start gaining clarity of mind. Of course, that's part of the point of mindfulness. In the beginning, in order for you to practice mindfulness of anything you'll have to do it very slowly. If you're constantly rushing around, your mindfulness practice won't be authentic. You'll be telling yourself that you're practicing mindfulness but you won't actually be mindful.

Computers, smartphones, and TVs aren't the enemy. But you do need to be careful not to go overboard. By shining the light of mindfulness on your life you'll be able to see clearly the effect these things have on your mind and body and be able to make the right decision for your well-being and the well-being of your loved ones.

It's important to establish mindfulness as a way of life as opposed to simply "something you do sometimes". By making mindfulness a way of life you'll begin to notice how these things distract you and pull you away from the real beauty of life. You'll naturally begin to distance yourself from these devices a bit. A busy mind is only natural and the modern age has made our minds more chaotic than ever. But by developing the practice of mindfulness in your daily life you have the ability to stop, calm, fully rest, and heal the mind and body which will provide a renewable source of peace and joy in your everyday life. In Part 3 I'll cover all the tips and tricks I've personally used to establish mindfulness as a way of life.

FAQ 3: How long can I expect to practice before seeing results?

I wouldn't bother worrying about when you're going to see results or not. You shouldn't be so focused on "getting results" when it comes to your spiritual practice or even just mindfulness in itself. Of course, it would be wrong to say that you started your practice for no reason. That just doesn't make any sense. You started because you wanted something, and this could be called a result. But what I really mean by that is you should be more focused on the practice itself. Know why you began your mindfulness practice, find confirmation of your practice in that and then let go of it. Practice without any expectations. Only once you let go will you obtain the greatest "results". If you keep hanging onto ideas of "I do this because I want to get this in return" then you'll never find true peace or happiness.

"OK, but just like you said I'm still going into this because I'm interested in gaining something", you say. I'm sure you, like most others including myself, began or want to begin practicing mindfulness in order to calm your mind and feel more peaceful and happy. If that's the case then you'll feel concrete effects of your practice almost immediately. When I say you can find true peace and happiness *in this moment*, I mean it. Of course, you'll need to develop your ability to experience the greatest results.

In all likelihood your first couple of weeks will be tough. You'll experience your monkey mind at its greatest intensity. Ultimately it all depends on how quiet (or loud) your mind is going into practice. Either way, don't judge yourself. It doesn't matter how quiet or loud your mind is, just that you practice diligently. For the most part, the "rewards" exist in the very moment of practicing and not in some far-off goal. This is an important lesson to learn. With mindfulness you'll learn to appreciate the present moment as it is in all its beauty

For me in my own practice, in the beginning seeing my mind gradually quiet and feeling the increasing sense of peace within myself as my practice developed was more than enough confirmation and encouragement for me to keep practicing. That started happening after just a few weeks and was rather significant.

Awakening to Your True Nature

As we discussed in the last chapter, mindfulness can allow us to obtain a tranquil mind and thereby bring a wellspring of peace and joy into our lives. But mindfulness has another important role. *It's the energy which allows us to discover the truth*. Specifically, the true nature of things including ourselves. So the second power of mindfulness is **the ability to help one obtain perfect clarity and awaken to one's true nature (vipassana).** By true nature I'm referring to our true "way" or our natural existence. By seeking to live in this way we can move beyond wrong perceptions and discover our true selves.

To discover one's true self is something so many people strive for. Some strive to discover this elusive state most of their lives. But so many of us have no idea what exactly this entails. Where do we start? The very question of "who am I?" is as confusing as it is open ended. For the most part, this question is difficult to answer because there are so many hidden forces at work in our lives: the negative emotions which keep us locked in a perpetual "mental prison", the ego which strives to protect our self-worth at all costs, the ever-present pressure from society to conform to often unrealistic or misguided ideas, other false views which distort our perception, and worst of all: fear. Fear of everything. Fear of what people think of us, fear of losing those close to us, and fear of losing our position in life, among other things. These forces alter our perception of reality. We think that these things are "us", so the question of "who am I?" becomes a seemingly impossible and often painful question to answer. But these things aren't really us. By living with mindfulness we can see beyond these wrong perceptions to our true nature.

What is our true nature? It's beyond all perception, beyond all mental formations, beyond the physical body we inhabit, and beyond the sense organs we use to experience the world around us. And it's beyond consciousness. You're not your thoughts, emotions, or sensations. Sure, you are a separate body, a separate brain, and you exist in a very real way separate from those around you. But at the same time you're not a separate self, disconnected from everything and everyone around you. You're limitless. You're in the trees, the flowers, and the clouds. And these things are in you. To confine ourselves to a limited identity such as "I am this old, this nationality, this sex, good at this, bad at this, I work here, and I've accomplished this." is to confine ourselves inside of a small box. Our true nature is boundless. We're intrinsically connected to all living and nonliving things. We and everything around us is impermanent, and yet, we exist beyond life and death itself in an endless continuation of energy. Our true existence is within the very ground of being, the plane of existence beyond words in which all things exist as one.

The essence of discovering our true nature is to come in contact with the ultimate. What is that? It goes by many names- the ultimate reality, the ultimate dimension, the ground of being, Buddha mind, nirvana, and even God. The ground of being is the ultimate level of reality. It can't be completely described in words because it's beyond the concept of language. It can only be experienced. It exists in some form in just about every religion and spiritual tradition on Earth. I don't want to speak too much about it, but know that the ultimate purpose of all spiritual practice is to touch the ground of being. *By living deeply in this world, the historical reality, we can touch the ground of being or ultimate reality*. To touch the historical reality deeply is a very meaningful and fulfilling practice. You don't need anything else. In that moment, everything is perfect. And you realize what true happiness is. *To discover our true nature is in fact to discover our true selves and our true potential.*

Building a resting place

It's important to become aware of the ideas in this chapter, but if you're just starting out don't bother with awakening or any of this ultimate reality stuff. Just focus on calming the mind. Work on stopping, calming, fully resting, and healing as we spoke about in the last chapter. Develop your mindfulness practice by sitting, walking, breathing, and doing as many basic tasks throughout your day with mindfulness. Do this for at least a few months. Let your practice progress naturally.

As we spoke about in the last chapter, with time you'll develop a great feeling of calm, experience a strong sense of peace and joy in everyday life, obtain complete rest, and heal the mind. These are all very important. But it also takes time to develop mindfulness as an ability and as a habit, so don't try to rush through this part. You won't get anywhere if you rush and will just end up wasting a lot of time and effort. The practice of calming the mind never ends, it will be something you practice for the rest of your life and it's equally important to gaining clarity of mind. Don't think you can bypass this and become truly at peace without it. There's no separating the two states of samatha and vipassana, in reality *they're two sides of the same coin*.

Remember when I said that calming the mind was the foundation for obtaining a clear mind? Tranquility and clarity are natural extensions of one another. When we calm our mind, it's like we've built a nest for our mind. This nest nurtures and heals the mind naturally. This is our resting place. But this resting place is also fertile ground for receiving insight. Take the time to build this resting place and you'll have a strong foundation which will allow you to begin touching reality deeply.

There's no separating the two states of samatha and vipassana, in reality they're two sides of the same coin.

Shining the Light of Mindfulness

So how does mindfulness help us discover our true nature? Mindfulness is the very vehicle which helps us see reality in its true state. By learning to live with mindfulness we can develop great clarity in order to see the world as it is. By "as it is", I'm referring to seeing into the true nature of all things. This is reality in its true form, free from our wrong views. And the act of obtaining this great mental clarity is traditionally called “awakening” (or “enlightenment” in many English translations of ancient Buddhist text). Why is all this important? Because it’s through this process of awakening that we discover our true nature and experience the ground of being. And it’s only until we learn to touch the ground of being that we discover the ultimate level of inner peace.

Imagine an orange. Your whole life you’ve seen this orange and you think the way that you see it is the way that it is. But, as we spoke about earlier, our wrong views color the lens (our perception) with which we perceive reality through. This wrong view of reality, which can be caused by a combination of “mental formations” such as fear, anger, and ignorance among many other things, is the ultimate source of all our suffering. By suffering I’m referring to a sort of mental ill-being. Think of it as the opposite of inner peace. With mindfulness the true nature of the orange will gradually reveal itself. You’ll see the orange peel back its skin and reveal something completely different from what you had perceived before. This is the process of awakening to the true nature of things.

Just as with calming the mind, gaining clarity of mind is a process. Don’t expect some sudden enlightenment to happen one day while practicing mindfulness. Moments of clarity can happen. These are moments of insight. But awakening is the slow process of peeling yourself and everything else in the world back one piece at a time to unveil the truth. You’ve lived your whole life “collecting” these false views (remember the internal check point?).

Imagine if you could wear ten pairs of sunglasses at once. Ten lenses, one in front of the other, in a row. Each of these lenses is a different color- green, pink, red, black- and each represents a wrong perception or mental formation which blocks you from experiencing reality in its true state. Your job is to remove each lens, one by one, until all ten pairs of sunglasses are gone. Each lens is blocking you from experiencing the full magnificence of the light. But with each pair of glasses you remove the more clearly you can see the light. It will take time to free yourself from all the things coloring your perception. But this is the ultimate liberation.

This is true freedom. To be free from all false views, to no longer be tortured by deep-seated issues or controlled by the ego, and to realize our limitless potential. I give this example to show that clarity is a gradual process. But as you work to wipe away your false views you'll develop a great sense of peace and liberation. It doesn't just come at the end of removing the last pair of sunglasses. You experience greater peace and joy each time you remove a lens. Every moment of mindfulness is an opportunity to touch the ground of our being. This is the magic of living deeply.

To live deeply is ultimately what a spiritual practice is about. This is because to live deeply is to touch the ground of being and eventually be liberated of all afflictions. Living deeply means nothing is trivial. Every single action, no matter how minor, holds great significance. Living in such a way, you appreciate every little thing in your life. You appreciate the water you have to drink, the food on your plate, the clothes on your back, for having healthy eyes with which to see, and you appreciate the *absence* of all those things which you really rather not have. Living deeply, in a way that cultivates a deep appreciation for the world around you, is a very fulfilling practice. By letting our mindfulness guide us, that is, being fully present for every action and placing our entire being into everything we do, we can realize our true nature.

Mindfulness is itself our "true vision". Remember the field of mindfulness example I gave earlier? Mindfulness is the quiet observer of everything. It judges nothing, so it sees with absolute clarity. It sees the outside world, the mind *in mind* (observing ones thoughts), and it sees the mind *in things*, that is, our perception of the things we experience in the outside world. So mindfulness *is itself* awakening. When you're practicing mindfulness *you are awakened*. It will take time though to identify and realize your true nature. But know that there is nothing to be gained, nothing you need to accomplish. You're perfect just as you are *in this moment*. So to live deeply with mindfulness is to strive to live true to our nature and touch the seed of awakening in us.

How do we live deeply with mindfulness? This will be a natural progression of your mindfulness practice. Once you've become fully rested your mind will be able to rest *in mind*. You'll now be able to experience mindfulness of the mind *in the mind* and the mind *in things*. Previously, we discussed the fact that everything we see, everything we experience, passes through our perception before we experience it. Because of this, the mind itself is part of what we're experiencing. This is mindfulness of the mind *in the mind*. In simple terms, there's no escaping the mind because *the mind is us*. So when we observe the behavior of the mind with mindfulness that's mindfulness of the mind while in the mind. We think we're looking at a book, but in reality we're looking at *our perception* of the book. This is because, in reality, there is no separating subject and object. You can never separate mind from that which the mind is perceiving. What you think of the book- whether you like the book or not, think the cover looks funny or cool, or if the book conjures some sort of old memories good or bad- arises from the mind and becomes your perception of the book. So to be mindful of the book is also to be mindful of the mind *in the book.*

Furthermore, this means that what we perceive isn't necessarily the real world at all. The book that we see is first and foremost an object of our consciousness. When you and I look at the book, we see two different books. I might have a bad memory of the book which distorts my perception of it. On the other hand, you might have a *good* memory of the book with positively distorts your perception of it. Neither is correct, *they're both distorted perceptions of the book.* It's when we can see the true book that we experience our own true nature.

Mindfulness is our master tool in the study of the self. By developing the power of mindfulness to the point where we can experience the mind in mind and the mind in things we begin to see that everything is mind. If the book we see (not the real book) is really an object of our consciousness, and the process of gaining clarity of mind is really about extinguishing all false views such as these, then mindfulness' role is the tool which allows us to see deeply into ourselves and identify these false views. The light of mindfulness, the great observer, is also a great healer. Remember the animal that simply sits and rests in peace and quiet in order to heal its wounds? Mindfulness is the healing energy which allows us to gradually erode all false views and concepts in order to touch the ground of our being. To realize our true nature is the only way to experience true inner peace. It will be difficult at first, but if you let mindfulness be your guide it will lead you to an existence filled with peace and joy.

Part 2: Practicing Mindfulness

Mindful Sitting

In Zen, the practice of sitting meditation is called “zazen”, which literally means sitting or seated meditation in Japanese. Zen monks practice zazen for long hours each day, even occasionally having meditation marathons where practitioners meditate for two-thirds to half of an entire day for multiple days straight. Why do Zen Buddhists put so much of their focus on sitting meditation? Because sitting meditation is the very foundation of meditative practice.

Think of a professional athlete. Despite being the best in the world at what they do, nearly every single day they practice the most fundamental aspects of their practice. Not only that, they do it for long hours. A professional and even championship winning NBA basketball player will continue to practice lay ups, jump shots, running up and down the court, passing the ball, running basic plays, as well as free throws constantly. This is the very essence of someone who has committed themselves to being the best at what they do, the essence of the greatest performers in the world in all callings. It’s the very drilling of these fundamental principles that is what makes them so great.

To lose sight of the core or fundamental practices which constitute your endeavor is to lose sight of your practice. Likewise, by practicing mindful sitting every day you make it easier to call upon your mindfulness during the rest of your day. If you’d like to establish a solid foundation in your mindfulness practice then setting up a daily practice of sitting meditation, either in the morning, night, or both, is very important. Mindful sitting is the foundation of the rest of your mindfulness practice. You don’t have to meditate for long hours though. You can start off by meditating for as little as 5 minutes a day and work your way up.

Zazen, or sitting meditation, is where I first started my own mindfulness practice. At first, without anyone there to coach or teach me, I thought the amount of activity in my head while meditating was abnormal. I was surprised with how chaotic my mind was and couldn't believe that I had been living like that, without ever giving my mind a rest. Little did I know at the time that what was going on in my head was perfectly normal. I was merely experiencing the typical monkey mind, which everyone experiences. But it didn't take long to get my mind to a relatively calm state. And as this happened, something began to develop inside of me. I'd feel it strongest during and right after my meditation session, but it started extending throughout the rest of my day gradually. It's one of the greatest feelings I've ever experienced in my life, but it's hard to explain. Simply "peaceful" is probably the best word to use. You need nothing during those moments of meditation. Everything is perfectly peaceful and you feel as if you could sit forever.

Not every meditation session will be like this. Even after working to calm the mind for some time you'll occasionally experience a tough day or a tough week and struggle during meditation. If this happens you just need to stick with it. Turn up the volume on your practice even, meditate for longer or do an extra session on that day or during that tough week in order to handle the pressure. If you persist, you'll overcome it and arrive at a point where you can keep your mind in a calm state even despite tough times. Establish a strong foundation of mindful sitting in your mindfulness practice and you'll be rewarded with a stability that nothing can shake. Like a tree that stands tall in a strong wind, nothing will be able to knock you down.

How to practice mindful sitting

The below instructions are separated into three sections: sitting, breathing, and finally meditating. The first section "Sit" goes over adopting the optimal posture and positioning. The second section "Breathe" covers how to properly follow and count your breath during meditation. Lastly, the third section "Be Mindful" goes over how to use your mindfulness while sitting. Keep in mind that while there may be ten (simple) steps, ultimately the practice of mindful sitting is as simple as one, two, and three: 1) sit down, 2) follow your breath, and 3) acknowledge anything and everything that steps into your field of mindfulness (or in other words, anything that diverts your concentration).

Sit

1. **Find a quiet place:** First, find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted.

2. **Find the optimal sitting position:** Find the sitting position that's most comfortable for you. Here are the most common:

2a. **Full lotus:** If possible, sit on the floor in the full or half lotus position. The full lotus position makes your body into a tripod, making it by far the most stable or sitting positions. To sit in the full lotus position, sit down in a typical cross-legged position. Now, take your left leg and place it on top of your right thigh (closer to your waist than your knee). Next, take your right leg and place it on top of you left thigh. This second leg will be much more difficult than the first. While moving the left leg make sure that the right leg does not slip from its position. While keeping your body in place, slide your bottom back a little to straighten your back.

2b. **Half-lotus:** The full lotus can be a difficult position to sit in, especially at first. In that case, you might feel more comfortable starting with the half lotus. In order to sit in the half lotus position, just place your left leg over your right thigh (or right leg over your left thigh). You should alternate regularly with the right leg on the left thigh as well. Eventually, with practice, it will become comfortable.

2c. **Sit in a chair:** If neither of these is possible you can also sit in a chair. Make sure to plant your feet on the ground and sit with your back straight. You can place a pillow or a zafu between your lower back and and the back of the chair to keep your back straight.

2d. **Use a cushion (if possible):** Whether you sit in the full lotus, half, lotus, a simple cross-legged position, or choose to use a chair I'd suggest using a firm pillow or a zafu (a Zen meditation pillow). A zafu pillow really improves stability, posture, and overall comfort during sitting meditation. Just sit on the last third or so of the zafu or firm pillow in order to help straighten your back (you can fold a typical bed pillow in half and sit on that if you don't have either). If you're sitting in the full or half lotus this will also help bring both knees to the floor, creating the tripod I spoke about in the full lotus section. Unless you do this one knee will stick up slightly while you're in the full or half lotus position, sacrificing some stability and comfort. A cushion isn't necessary, it just makes meditation more comfortable and therefore allows you to focus more on what's important: your meditation.

3. **Loosen up:** Now that you're in your optimal seated position, relax and take a few deep breaths. Stretch your back, neck, shoulders, and arms a bit. Loosen the muscles in your face by forming a half-smile. Feel all of the tension roll off your body. Relaxing your body will make it easier to focus during your meditation.

4. **Form the proper posture:** This is very important in meditation (actually it's always important). Improper posture can cause you back pain, obstruct your breathing and even affect your concentration, so make sure to take the time to perfect the proper sitting meditation posture. Your back and neck should be straight with the top of your head pointed towards the sky. Let your stomach relax. If you tilt your chin just slightly you will gain greater stability as well. Also, if you're on a zafu or firm pillow you can rock back and forth as well as left and right in order to find the most stable position for your body. If your posture is solid but you're leaning a bit on your pillow your muscles will stay tensed trying to balance you on the pillow. By rocking you can find the most stable position and remove that potential distraction during meditation.

5. **Form the cosmic mudrā:** Mudrā is a Sanskrit word meaning “seal”, “mark”, or “gesture”. A mudrā is essentially a placement of the body which is supposed to symbolize some greater principle and remind the practitioner of that principle, although I believe the original purpose of mudras was also to improve the flow of oxygen to the body by adopting optimal positioning of the hands and arms. Because my background is in Zen Buddhist meditation, I form the “cosmic” mudrā while meditating. In order to form the cosmic mudrā, place your hands in your lap with palms facing up. Place one hand on top of the other, the dominant hand’s finger joints on top of the other hand’s finger joints so that your dominant hand’s fingers overlap the other hands. Thumbs touching at the tips creating an oval shape inside of your hands. The purpose of the cosmic mudrā is to place your focus on the “hara”, or spiritual center of the body, which is located about 2 inches below your naval. Placing the hara as your point of attention brings mind, body and breath together as one and assists you in following your breath.

6. **Eyes half-closed:** Look down a couple of feet in front of you and then let your eyelids drop naturally. They should end up about halfway shut. The reason you keep your eyes partially open is so as to not invite lethargy and doze off. You look down because it helps your eyelids lower naturally which also keeps you from blinking as often.

Breathe

7. **Be mindful of your in breath and out breath:** Close your mouth and breathe in and out through your nose. If a cold or some other condition makes this uncomfortable then it’s OK to breathe through your mouth, although deeper and more effortless breathing can be done through the nostrils. Breathe in, breathe out. Put complete focus on your breath. Your breath is your singular focus during this meditation**.** Don’t attempt to control your breath, simply observe it silently. Your silent observation will

slowly begin to calm your breathing naturally. Feel your breath gradually go in and out. In order to keep your concentration on your breath you'll need to follow each complete in breath and out breath from start to finish. This will also make it easier to notice when you've lost your concentration and give you a clear path to regain it. You should be attempting to be mindful of your breath 100% of the time you're sitting.

8. **Count each inhalation and exhalation:** Inhale...one. Exhale....two. Count the number at the end each inhale and exhale. Count to 10 like this. If a thought distracts you, start the 10 count over from 1. When you get to 10, start over and attempt to count to 10 again. Do this for as many weeks or months as it takes *until you can count to 10 repeatedly with little effort*. Then count each inhale + exhale as one. Then, when that becomes easy, stop counting and simply follow your breath. *Don't rush this step, progress naturally*. This step is incredibly important in the beginning stages because this is how you'll develop your power of concentration.

Be Mindful

9. **Gently acknowledge any thoughts and feelings:** Thoughts will come, don't push them away. Noticing this is a good thing, it means your mindfulness is developing. Remember that these thoughts, feelings, and sensations are natural. Meditation is acceptance, not avoidance. You want those things to rise to the surface during meditation because that is when the real healing will begin. Fear, anger, stress, and so many other things can and will rise to the surface so that you can let them run their course and dissipate. Each one of these afflictions you heal will bring you greater peace and happiness.

10. **Immediately recapture focus on your breath:** Let go of the thought and return to your breath. This will be difficult at first, you'll lose focus constantly. Don't become frustrated when your mind drifts, know that it's a normal part of the process. Stay

focused, after a while your mind will begin to grow quieter and you'll start gaining better control over your mind. This may take a few weeks or even months.

* * *

Once you're done meditating, don't rush off. Sit for another few seconds or so and slowly release your legs so that they can stretch if you were sitting in one of the lotus positions. At first the full lotus might make one of your legs fall asleep. You'll just have to get used to this sitting position. The nice thing is, you won't feel it until you undo your legs at the end of your session. But it's a wonderful feeling (joke)! And lastly, take a few seconds to relish this moment of peace and feel the difference in your mind and body before getting up and continuing on with your day.

In the beginning, you'll want to meditate for 5-10 minutes at a time once or twice a day. Increase your sessions by about 5 minutes at a time whenever you feel comfortable. You should feel gradually able to sit down for longer and longer periods. Work your way up to whatever timetable is best for you, but if you'd like a recommendation I'd say somewhere around two 30-45 minute sessions per day. Remember though, that it's up to you. Meditate for however long you want, just remember that the longer you meditate the more beneficial it will be.

FAQ 4: Can't I just sit down however I want when I meditate? Do I have to sit in the full-lotus in order to get the greatest benefit from sitting meditation?

No, you don't have to sit in any particular position. The purpose of the full lotus is simply that it's the most stable sitting position available to us. When you sit in the full lotus while being supported by a proper cushion you'll see what I mean. In the full lotus you feel extremely stable. Even more stable than sitting in a chair.

You can meditate in whatever sitting position you'd like. But be careful, a stable sitting position and proper posture are very important in a regular meditation practice. The full lotus is the most stable position by far and, once you get used to it, a very comfortable position to meditate in. Because of the stability of the full lotus it also removes potential bodily distractions from sitting meditation. You're free to let your mind and body vanish and simply sit with your breath.

You should strive to eventually sit in the full lotus. This is a difficult position to sit in even with practice for some which is why I mentioned earlier in the chapter that you can sit in the half lotus or even sit cross-legged or on a chair if neither of those are comfortable for you. In no way is any specific sitting position a requirement. Don't let anyone tell you so. Sit in whatever position you can and meditate diligently.

Mindful Walking

We walk to our cars, to work, to home, stores, and sometimes just for fun. Wherever you are and whenever you walk you almost always have the opportunity to make it a mindful walk. There's so many great opportunities to practice mindful walking in the average person's day that it can be adopted by anyone with little effort and create a major impact on one's sense of inner peace.

Mindful walking is generally considered one of the core meditative practices. But traditionally, mindful walking is called walking meditation. Don't get confused though, when I say walking meditation I'm simply talking about mindful walking. Walking meditation has been practiced by people of various spiritual traditions for possibly as long as sitting meditation. This is probably because of how natural, simple, and nourishing the practice of walking meditation is. While practicing walking meditation your object of concentration is your steps. First, concentrate on the foot rising and being placed down onto the ground. Once the foot has been placed down you shift your concentration to the second foot doing the same motion. At first, you'll have to practice walking meditation very slowly to get the hang of it. But after a while, as with anything else in mindfulness, you'll be able to walk mindfully at a normal speed while staying mindful. The act of placing your foot down on the ground can be done in a very deep way. By acknowledging the earth's presence below your foot each time you place your foot down you can experience a deep sense of peace and joy in the simple act of walking.

How to Practice Mindful Walking

Decide

1. **Decide where you're walking to:** Fix your sights on a location in front of you such as your car, your house, a building, the end of a room, a street, or a tree. Wherever it is, decide consciously that this is where you're walking to before you begin walking mindfully.

Walk

2. **Match your steps with your breath:** Breathe naturally, see how many slow steps you take for each natural inhale and exhale. This step can be difficult at first because you'll want to control your breathing or your steps. Don't attempt to control either. Resist trying to control both your breathing and your steps and let them flow naturally.

3. **Be mindful of your steps:** As I mentioned earlier, the object of your concentration in this meditation will be your steps. Put 100% of your concentration into your steps. You'll want to put great care into each step you take, so walk slowly. Feel one foot rise and then come down. As soon as that foot is placed down be mindful of your other foot rising up and then coming down as well. Then back to the first foot, and the next, and the next. Move slowly and shift your concentration back and forth from one foot to the other. In order to keep your concentration on your steps you'll need to follow each complete step from start to finish. This will also make it easier to notice when you've lost your concentration and give you a clear path to regain it.

4. **Count each step:** Just as you count your breaths in sitting meditation, you can say "in" for each step on inhale and "out" for each step on exhale. So "in, in, in" on each inhale if you take 3 steps and "out, out, out" on each exhale for 3 more in order to improve your ability to notice when you lose your concentration. You can also say a phrase that calms you if you prefer. In that case, just match the number of steps you're taking with syllables. So 3 steps per inhale/exhale could be "be-at-peace".

Be Mindful

5. **Gently acknowledge any thoughts and feelings:** Thoughts will come, don't push them away. Noticing this is a good thing, it means your mindfulness is developing. Remember that these thoughts, feelings, and sensations are natural. Meditation is acceptance, not avoidance. You want those things to rise to the surface during meditation because that is when the real healing will begin. Fear, anger, stress, and so many other things can and will rise to the surface so that you can let them run their course and dissipate. Each one of these afflictions you heal will bring you greater peace and happiness.

6. **Immediately recapture focus on your breath:** Let go of the thought and return to your breath. This will be difficult at first, you'll lose focus constantly. Don't become frustrated when your mind drifts, know that it's a normal part of the process. Stay focused, after a while your mind will begin to grow quieter and you'll start gaining better control over your mind. This may take a few weeks or even months.

* * *

Take this moment in for everything that it is. There is no past and no future. Know that peace exists in this moment as you walk across the earth in mindfulness. Feel the earth beneath your feet. Whether you're walking on grass, sand, pavement, or dirt, know that you're touching mother earth deeply with each step. The same mother earth that every one of your ancestors walked on before you. Walking meditation is a special practice which should be treated with great care. As little as 15 minutes of mindful walking can completely transform the stress of your day into pure peace.

Walk mindfully everywhere you go. Anytime you can, take a second to walk in mindfulness. Take a second to look around and appreciate your surroundings. Take a mindful breath of fresh air. Then go back to your steps. In this moment, you're truly awake and touching the depths of your being.

FAQ 5: The same thought keeps coming into my mind while meditating, what does it mean?

Don't worry, this is normal. Because everything is an object of your consciousness, mindfulness is really about becoming fully aware of your own complete body and mind. Your thoughts and emotions being a part of that. If the same thought keeps creeping into your mind during meditation, then, as you do with any thought, simply acknowledge it each time it comes to the surface and then bring your focus back to your breath. Do this as many times as necessary. You're letting the emotion run its course. Whether it's a specific fear, anger, or some limiting belief, this is a good thing because it's a clear sign that your mindfulness is improving.

If you stick to your practice you will slowly and gently unfold your mind, watching all your fear, anger and stress dissipate. This is why it's important to practice mindfulness in your everyday life. Even if you meditate every single day it won't be enough. You need to work on being mindful during your everyday life in order to uncover all the various afflictions blocking you from experiencing true peace and happiness.

Mindful Breathing

Mindful sitting is essentially mindful breathing, but there's a distinct difference between sitting in a quiet room and pooling all of your concentration towards meditation vs. stopping at various points in your busy day to come back to yourself through mindful breathing. Both are mindful breathing, but this chapter will show you how to explore the latter. Mindful breathing is the practice of "going home". By going home I mean coming back to yourself and uniting body and mind. This is a very important practice.

Many people today are rushing around so much that they don't stop all day to rest until it's time for bed. I know the feeling. You want to be as productive as possible, and you convince yourself that you'll be fine no matter how hard you push yourself. But you aren't, and you won't be. You're making yourself stressed, anxious, unhappy, easy to anger, easy to distract, less effective, less productive, and muffling your creativity by pushing yourself so hard. And it will only get worse. *You need to learn the art of stopping and breathing*. This is the practice of mindful breathing. Mindful breathing can be a very nourishing practice if you work on developing it. It can work like an anchor in your life, keeping you grounded no matter what is going on around you. It can also work as an "emergency button" of sorts for when you encounter high stress situations.

Daily Breathing

The first way mindful breathing can be useful is as a constant companion during your daily life. We're often moving so quickly that we stop noticing what's going on around and inside of us. In a way, we're muffling our entire lives. This is dangerous, because something can be happening right under our noses and we'd never notice it. For instance, we could be developing a deep anger towards someone over something that happened recently and, because we're moving constantly throughout our day without mindfulness, we never notice it until it's a real problem. This can be very damaging to our well-being. By stopping regularly to practice mindful breathing we shine a sort of spotlight on our lives and give ourselves the ability to not only detect these wounds but also give ourselves a way to heal them.

I practice mindful breathing nearly every hour of every day for 1-2 minutes. I've found this to be my most comfortable routine. No matter what I'm doing, I stop everything to practice my mindful breathing. The first couple of days will be easy, but after a while you'll likely find yourself ignoring your reminder to practice or trying to give yourself the excuse that what you're doing right now is too important and that you'll practice as soon as you're done. Don't listen to these voices. Trust me, if you start listening to them your practice will suffer and you'll notice it. I'd say it's actually healthy for this to happen a few times at first. It will lead you to a greater appreciation of your practice because you'll see the difference in how you feel. But make sure to get right back on course and use the learning experience as an opportunity to strengthen your practice.

To practice mindful breathing, you'll do essentially the same as in the mindful sitting chapter, with just a few changes:

Stop

1. **Stop:** Stop everything. If you're at work you might prefer to find a more private place. In my experience though if you just stop and breathe where you're at it will just look like you're standing or sitting in your normal way. No one will notice. You can stare at your computer screen or desk if you're sitting for instance. You'll typically only stop to breathe for a minute or so anyway so it will be pretty quick.

Breathe

2. **Be mindful of your in breath and out breath:** Close your mouth and breathe in and out through your nose. If a cold or some other condition makes this uncomfortable then it's OK to breathe through your mouth, although deeper and more effortless breathing can be done through the nostrils. Breathe in, breathe out. Put complete focus on your breath. Your breath is your singular focus during this meditation**.** Don't attempt to control your breath, simply observe it silently. Your silent observation will slowly begin to calm your breathing naturally. Feel your breath gradually go in and out. In order to keep your concentration on your breath you'll need to follow each complete in breath and out breath from start to finish. This will also make it easier to notice when you've lost your concentration and give you a clear path to regain it. You should be attempting to be mindful of your breath 100% of the time you're sitting.

3. **Count each inhalation and exhalation:** Inhale…one. Exhale….two. Count the number at the end of each inhale and exhale. Count to 10 like this. If a thought distracts you, start the 10 count over from 1. When you get to 10, start over and attempt to count to 10 again. Do this for as many weeks or months as it takes *until you can count to 10 repeatedly with little effort*. Then count each inhale + exhale as one. Then, when that becomes easy, stop counting and simply follow your breath. *Don't rush this step, progress naturally*. This step is incredibly important in the beginning stages because this is how you'll develop your power of concentration.

Be Mindful

4. **Gently acknowledge any thoughts and feelings:** Thoughts will come, don't push them away. Noticing this is a good thing, it means your mindfulness is developing. Remember that these thoughts, feelings, and sensations are natural. Meditation is acceptance, not avoidance. You want those things to rise to the surface during meditation because that is when the real healing will begin. Fear, anger, stress, and so many

other things can and will rise to the surface so that you can let them run their course and dissipate. Each one of these afflictions you heal will bring you greater peace and happiness.

5. **Immediately recapture focus on your breath:** Let go of the thought and return to your breath. This will be difficult at first, you'll lose focus constantly. Don't become frustrated when your mind drifts, know that it's a normal part of the process. Stay focused, after a while your mind will begin to grow quieter and you'll start gaining better control over your mind. This may take a few weeks or even months.

* * *

Do this for about sixty seconds. You don't have to time yourself though unless you prefer to. Just breathe mindfully for what feels like about a minute. It's easy to set a quick timer with your phone though if you'd rather be exact. I'd test both out and see what works better. The main reason you might end up preferring to not set a timer is because it's generally best to practice your short mindful breathing session for as long as it takes you to get to a semi-deep state of meditation. This could take thirty seconds, one minute, sometimes two. Personally, I go without a timer. If it takes me two minutes to bring relative calm to myself it usually means I'm a little busier than normal. In which case, I'd prefer to breathe a little bit longer.

Emergency Button

Another way to use mindful breathing is as a sort of "emergency button". What I mean by that is if you encounter a high stress situation, such as when receiving some bad news, you can use mindful breathing to stop and calm your mind in order to take hold of yourself during this difficult situation. Our breath is a powerful force. It can be used to control our very emotions. When you're feeling an intense anxiety, fear, anger, or sadness you can use mindful breathing to calm the feeling and literally take back control of the situation. Don't underestimate the power of your breathing. Your breath is one of your greatest tools in controlling your mood, use it often and wisely.

Remember when I mentioned the importance of breathing mindfully until you feel a relative calm come over you as opposed to sticking to a set timer? The only difference between practicing mindful breathing throughout your day and mindful breathing in "emergency" situations is that you'll always want to breathe until the point in which you feel the emotion start to subside. It doesn't have to go away completely, just enough to where you can take back control of your mind (although honestly, if you have time to go sit down and breathe mindfully it will help the situation even more). However long that takes, just keep breathing. Our breath is the pathway that reunites body and mind and brings harmony to the whole. Use this amazing tool whenever you need it. The great thing is, it's always available to you. No matter where you are, no matter what you're doing, and no matter what's going on, your breath is always there to help.

FAQ 6: Everywhere I read I'm being told to acknowledge the thought and then "let it go". What does that even mean?

What's important is that you acknowledge the thought with mindfulness. Acknowledging the thought with mindfulness is itself a nonjudgmental action. You aren't judging the thought or yourself for having the thought. By "let it go" the teacher is probably often referring to the nonjudgmental aspect of mindfulness, whether they realize it or not. It's not a bad description, I like it myself because it reminds one of the nonjudgmental aspect of mindfulness, but more detail needs to be given of the action instead of just "let it go".

The only action that will precede acknowledging the thought with mindfulness will be you bringing your concentration back to the object of mindfulness, be it your breath, steps, or the act of sweeping, washing dishes, eating food, or whatever else you're being mindful of. Essentially, because mindfulness is itself by nature nonjudgmental, there will be no letting go. There will simply be no clinging. Mindfulness is what observes the thought, but mindfulness does not grab hold of anything in the first place. So there is nothing to let go of.

More often than not the same thought will reappear constantly. Instead of trying to kindly get the elephant out the door, only to find him resisting, imagine yourself talking to a giraffe and the elephant walks up and interrupts you. Bringing your concentration back to your object of mindfulness isn't letting the thought go, it's simply turning away from the elephant and continuing your conversation with the giraffe. Yes, the elephant will continue to try and interrupt. But simply being with these interruptions in order to heal them is the very nature of meditative practice. It will take some time to heal. Just keep sitting and be with the elephant. Don't make him leave, just sit with him and eventually he'll calm down and stop interrupting you. When this happens, the thought or emotion (the elephant) will have subsided.

Mindful Living

Mindful sitting, mindful walking, and mindful breathing are the most basic meditative practices. Going back to the example of the professional athlete, these are your fundamentals. But in order to develop a healthy practice which leads to true peace and happiness one should strive to live each waking moment in mindfulness. This will be difficult, but no matter what stage you're at the more you work at it the more rewarding your practice will be.

So, where do you start? You've got your regular morning and/or evening practice of mindful sitting, you practice your breathing every hour and you use it when you're faced with any difficult situation, and you practice mindful walking whenever possible. But when you work, sit down to eat, go out to have fun with friends or family, clean the house, or do anything else you can and should also be mindful. Every moment of every day is an opportunity to shine the healing light of mindfulness as well as to feel the peace and joy of living fully in the present moment.

Mindful eating

With multiple opportunities to practice mindful eating each day, learning to eat with mindfulness can become a very nourishing practice. Eating is already typically enjoyable, but eating with mindfulness can turn breakfast, lunch, or dinner into a deeply spiritual and joy filled experience. And anything which is naturally enjoyable can easily be done with mindfulness. This is because joy and excitement naturally pull our attention to the thing we're enjoying or are excited about and away from any potential distractions.

To practice mindful eating you simply need to direct your mindfulness to the act of chewing your food. The anchor point of mindfulness (what your concentration latches onto) is always an action executed by you. This could be breathing, walking, chewing, or a million other actions. Whatever it is, in order to be mindful you need only drop your anchor onto whatever you're doing in the present moment in order to be mindful of the entire moment. You're being mindful of both the act of placing the food into your mouth, and when it hits your mouth, the act of chewing the food itself. That's where your concentration should rest. Be fully present for the act of consuming your meal with mindfulness and everything that arises from that including the sensations of eating the food itself.

Take your time with each bite. Don't eat another bite until you're done with the bite in your mouth. If you go to take or prepare another bite before finishing the bite in your mouth then you're not eating with mindfulness. When you practice mindful eating you're being fully present for the food that's in front of you, don't try to rush through the meal in order to get to something else. This is just your conditioned mind trying to move you in the direction of your old habit energies. While you're eating with mindfulness there is nothing else. There is only the meal in front of you.

To deepen your practice, take a moment to see the food in its true state. If you're eating a salad, see the lettuce leaf as the true lettuce leaf. See the water in the lettuce, the sunlight which helped the lettuce grow, the soil which provided nutrients, and the farmer who farmed the lettuce. If you took even one of these elements away the lettuce would not exist. By looking deeply into the lettuce and touching its true nature, feelings of gratitude and appreciation will naturally arise in you. This is using your mindfulness to look deeply into your meal. By eating in this way you can further deepen the practice of mindful eating and make it a very spiritually nourishing practice.

Mindful working

Many people around the world spend a third or more of their lives at work. This is an enormous amount of time. By practicing mindfulness at work you can find a lot joy in what you do, even in the simplest of tasks.

To practice mindful working you simply need to be fully present for the work at hand. Whether you're walking from one location to another, eating lunch, typing an email on your computer, or having a conversation with someone, do so with mindfulness. The next time you step into the office, don't worry about actually being mindful, simply take the day to notice opportunities to practice mindfulness. Remember every moment is an opportunity to practice mindfulness, but what you're doing here is looking for clear and easy opportunities to practice. You might work at an office, on a construction site, in a factory, or at home taking care of your children. You'll need to examine your own days to find the best times to begin introducing the practice of mindfulness into your work day and the rest of your daily life.

Most workplaces have a tendency to be busy and filled with constant distractions. So to practice mindfulness at work can also mean you need to be mindful of any unexpected occurrences that arise. Surprises are commonplace in many workplaces, so you need to know how to respond to these surprises with mindfulness. Imagine these surprises as thoughts arising while sitting in meditation. You don't push these thoughts away, you acknowledge them with your mindfulness just as you acknowledge your breath. Take care of the interruption, but always bring your focus back to the main task at hand just as when bringing your focus back to your breath. Don't let yourself be led away by distractions. This can help make you more productive as well as lend to your mindfulness practice.

Mindful experiencing

The very essence of mindfulness is to fully experience what's occurring in the present moment. When you go out with friends or spend a day with family you can practice mindful experiencing and not only continue your mindfulness practice but really take the most from the experience. Mindful experiencing is really just practicing mindfulness in general, but it's with the greater goal of making the most of time with friends and family.

During a mindful experience you could be mindful of the feeling of the breeze on your face and in your hair when driving to your destination, of how your child's smile makes you feel when doing something they enjoy, you could practice deep listening and loving speech (mindfulness of speaking and listening in conversation) while conversing with friends and family on the outing, or select a specific sense organ, such as your ears at one point and eyes on another, and simply focus on everything coming into that sense organ during those moments. If you're practicing mindfulness of hearing while taking a tram ride you can block everything out and just be mindful of every sound that enters your ears. Be fully present for every sound. If you're on a roller coaster or some amusement park ride you can practice mindfulness of body and fully take in all the twists, turns, and drops. And you don't have to do something fast paced, you could simply walk through a park with a loved one or draw with your child in mindfulness. There's a limitless number of ways you can practice mindfulness when enjoying time with friends and family. The point is that you're fully awake to whatever is happening in the present moment.

I visited Disneyland recently. I grew up near this particular Disneyland so I've been to it on a number of occasions growing up. I'm always interested to see the way people act when going out to have fun at places like amusement parks. Especially families going as a group, but not excluding anyone else. I was in line at what I believe was the Star Wars ride when my awareness was piqued by a conversation that a mother was having with her two children in front of us in line. It went something like this:

Child: "I want to go on the X ride!"

Mother: "Alright. Your brother likes this ride so we're going to get this over with and then we'll run over to X and get that over with so we have them out of the way. That way, we don't have to deal with them for the rest of the day."

It might have seemed to some like the mother was physically at Disneyland, but in reality she was still working. Ready to tackle her to-do list for the day, maximize her productivity, and keep her house or office in order. There's nothing inherently wrong with a to-do list. But so many of us get into the trap of letting a productivity mindset control our lives. We're so used to rushing around all the time thinking that if we get more done we'll be happier. But it doesn't work that way. Take your time, don't rush through these experiences just to try and get the most things done in a day. You'll only end up dead tired by the end of it and feeling like you just worked an overtime shift at work. This isn't relaxation at all. Don't forget why you go out to do things with family and friends- to enjoy yourself and each other's company. Let your mindfulness guide you towards a more enjoyable experience. It doesn't matter if you went on two rides all day, or if all you did was sit down to draw with your daughter at home. If you did it with mindfulness then it was worth more than an entire day at Disneyland.

Mindful cleaning

One of the beautiful things about mindfulness is that it can take typically boring and mundane activities and make them meaningful and deeply enjoyable. This is probably best exemplified with cleaning in mindfulness. Cleaning with mindfulness can be a very deep practice. Indeed, practices which you wouldn't typically consider deep or meaningful at all can be some of the deepest and most meaningful because of their simple nature.

What does mindful cleaning look like? It could be sweeping in mindfulness. Focusing on your body creating each stroke of the broom's brush, handling the broom and the task of sweeping with great care and reverence as if sweeping this floor was the most important thing in the universe. It could be washing dishes in mindfulness. Take the time to wash each dish with all of your being, concentrating on the act of washing the dish with your hands. If could also be mindfulness of watering the garden, cleaning the windows or tabletops, or mopping the floor. Whatever it is, while cleaning treat that particular task as the most important thing in the world at that very moment. And as usual, if you become distracted, simply acknowledge the distraction with your mindfulness and bring your concentration back to the task at hand.

Mindful living

In this chapter we've looked at mindful eating, mindful working, mindful experiencing, and mindful cleaning. Combined with mindful sitting, mindful walking, and mindful breathing we've covered huge ground. But it doesn't stop there. As I mentioned before, you can practice mindfulness of anything and everything. You should strive to be mindful 24/7. All day, every day.

The instructions we covered throughout this section can be applied towards anything. Pick your object of mindfulness, preferably some part of you *in action* because to concentrate on something stationary is much more difficult than something which is constantly changing or moving in some fashion (think in/out breath, steps, sensations, chewing and tasting, sweeping, etc.), and then simply be mindful. It might take a while to bring mindfulness into your entire life, but if you practice the fundamentals daily, keep learning, and let the light of mindfulness spread into the other areas of your life then you'll develop a practice which nurtures a deep sense of peace and happiness within you.

FAQ 7: How do I know when I'm practicing mindfulness?

At first, you're going to be confused as to whether or not you're really practicing mindfulness. So, you're supposed to read some words on a page and then just....hope you're doing it right? That's where faith comes in. I don't mean faith in a higher power, but I am talking about belief and confidence in something. In this case, that means confidence in the teaching or instruction of this book. Trust the instruction in this book and just practice. Keep practicing and, with time, you'll get the hang of it.

There are some good ways to identify that you're practicing correctly. The best place to start is with what I mentioned on point 6 in the *Mindfulness is…* chapter, but there's also a few questions you can ask yourself to further ensure you're practicing correctly. Ask yourself these questions once you've been practicing for a few weeks (the answer to each of these is likely to be yes if you're practicing correctly):

Q1: Do I feel happier and more at peace than I did before I started practicing mindfulness?

Q2: Do I feel less stress and mental exhaustion than before?

Q3: Am I feeling less angry and more patient than I did before?

Q4: While being mindful, am I sensing the interruptions that arise in my mind and body, even if I don't yet know exactly what those interruptions are?

Q5: When I become mindful, do I feel like I just turned the light switch on to my life? Do I feel more aware of what's going on within myself?

Q1-Q3 are clear indicators that you're not only practicing mindfulness but that you're practice is working.

If you answered no to Q4, you might be concentrating too hard. That is, forcing your concentration to the point where you'll give yourself a headache. Softly direct your concentration to the object of mindfulness and softly redirect it when your concentration lapses. If you're concentrating too hard then you're not giving your mindfulness the chance to come out and play.

And in regards to Q5, remember that mindfulness is a conscious decision. The moment you decide to become mindful is a conscious decision, and an act, committed by you. You should feel an immediate change in your awareness when making this conscious decision.

Part 3: Developing Mindfulness

Overcoming Old Habits

Mindfulness is like anything else, it takes work to develop it into a daily practice. You'll work and work to establish a daily practice and things will just keep getting in the way. You'll make strides but you'll also falter at times. But it will all be worth it. And with mindfulness there's no waiting for your reward, every moment in mindfulness is healing and revitalizing. In Part 3 we'll discuss the most important components to developing mindfulness as a way of life. Keep in mind that the set of tools I'll cover in this section isn't exhaustive. It's simply everything that I myself have used to develop mindfulness into a daily practice. Everyone's situation is different. You might be able to think of your own tools which will help you develop mindfulness.

What would it be like to be mindful from the time you wake up until the time you lay your head down to rest? With a daily practice of mindful sitting, mindful breathing, mindful walking, and a daily practice of showing reverence for every little moment in your daily life you'd live constantly aware of the precious nature of each moment of life, appreciative of everything you have (and don't have), calm as a gentle stream of water, with a clear vision to witness your mind unfold to the true nature of yourself and the world around you. This is the ultimate goal of all spiritual practice and ultimately what we all want. To be truly happy and at peace. That's the point.

So then what keeps us from accomplishing this? Even if you're just starting out and simply striving to meditate for 20 minutes a day, to make mindfulness a daily practice takes work. Whether your daily practice is all day, every chance you get, just sometimes, or for simply 5 minutes every day, you'll need some tools to help you develop it into a daily habit or practice. When it comes to developing mindfulness, or anything else for that matter, as a daily practice, our habit energy is the major force standing in our way. Sure, outside circumstances affect us, but without our old habit energy in the way nothing significant would hold us back from changing nearly every part of our life in an instant.

Fortunately for us, the very thing we're attempting to make a daily practice can be the most powerful force in helping us overcome old habit energies. In working to develop mindfulness as a daily practice it's important to be mindful of when your old habit energies are trying to pull you away. Simply by observing your old habit energy with mindfulness you reduce the pull it has on you. And the more you observe it the weaker it gets. Observe the old habit energy long enough without giving in and you'll transform it into something positive. When we don't *fully* know or fully realize what we're doing is bad for us then we keep doing it. This is the position so many people are in. But when we fully realize what we're doing and why it's bad for us then we stop doing that thing and almost always replace it with something positive.

Mindfulness will help you delve deeply into your old habit energies and find out why you're being pulled in their direction. "I'm tired", "I don't have the energy to do that", and "I'll do it later". These are things we tell ourselves constantly in our subconscious mind without ever noticing. The longer and more often we're mindful the more we'll begin to actually witness us making these comments to ourselves. Then we'll put the power back into our own hands and be able say "no" to these many excuses. That's one of the great things about mindfulness. A lot of times all that's needed is to notice what we're really doing because we never fully see ourselves as we go about our daily lives. By seeing ourselves clearly, even without taking any particular action other than being mindful, we can rewrite these old habit energies.

But that doesn't mean that everything will be smooth sailing. No matter what you do you'll still have a lot of tough days. Sometimes tough weeks. You'll try to practice and something will get in the way, you'll listen to your own excuses and fall off for a moment, or a number of other things that can happen will happen. No matter what you do you'll encounter adversity. So in the next two chapters of Part 3 I'll cover all of my best tips and tricks for beginning with mindfulness and establishing it as a daily practice. These are the various tools I've used to overcome my own old habit energies as well as the pull of outside circumstance to establish mindfulness as a daily practice. Each of these various tools works towards the same purpose: overcoming old habit energy and outside circumstances in order to develop mindfulness as a daily practice which nourishes your mind and body and helps you realize true peace and happiness.

FAQ 8: I often go days without remembering to practice mindfulness. I feel like it's just not working for me. What am I supposed to do?

Tackling that very good question is the very purpose of Part 3. This is something you'll undoubtedly encounter when beginning to develop mindfulness as a daily practice. The chapter *Tools of Mindfulness* is about just that- overcoming our natural ability to forget to practice, mostly because of outside circumstances pulling us away. Most of us are pretty busy, so it can be really easy to let an entire day go by and forget to practice mindfulness altogether. Especially when we're used to rushing around from the time we wake up until the time we lay our heads down to rest. If you use one or more of the techniques I outline in *Tools of Mindfulness* chapter then eventually your practice will grow and you'll be practicing on a daily basis.

You might begin to notice yourself slowing during this time. I mean that you begin to move more slowly throughout your day than you did previously. And yet, you'll be getting more done. This is one of the beautiful benefits of mindfulness. Mindfulness will help you realize that all that rushing around never made you more productive. And now you have a better way.

Tips and Tricks for Beginning with Mindfulness

When I first started practicing mindfulness I had a lot of tough days. Sometimes a tough string of days. I'd often go the entire day and forget to practice mindfulness altogether. I knew how important it was to me and yet I'd find myself completely forgetting to be mindful all day long. It was frustrating to say the least.

By now you know why mindfulness is important, what it can do, and how to practice it. But when you actually take this information and attempt to apply it in real life you're going to see that it won't be all rainbows and cupcakes (if that's even a good thing). As with a lot of things, developing mindfulness into a regular part of your life can be difficult. Likelihood is you've already started dabbling in the techniques I spoke about in the last chapter. But in order to really develop mindfulness as a daily practice and to make it a consistent part of your life so that you reap the full benefits you need to do more than just read this book and occasionally be mindful when you remember to do so.

As we talked about earlier, modern life is filled with distractions. Not only that, we're taught to move fast, get things done quickly, and multitask whenever possible. But not only are none of these things necessarily more productive, which is the entire point, they're not generally good for our well-being and a bad environment to begin developing mindfulness in. So you're going to need some tools. At least at first, before the habit is developed. In this chapter I'm going to cover the various tools I myself used in order to develop mindfulness as a daily practice.

So, where do you start? It can be difficult to know where to begin one's practice of mindfulness. Many resources discuss mindfulness only as a form of sitting meditation. This greatly limits your practice. In order to obtain a clear mind you can't just practice mindfulness during sitting meditation. You also need to be mindful while going about your everyday life. After all, what good is anything which isn't actually useful to you in your everyday life?

One of the great things about mindfulness is that it's available to you in every moment. You can practice mindfulness right now this very second and touch seeds of peace and joy within yourself. You can directly and immediately create a positive effect in your daily life and in a number of ways. This has to be taken advantage of in order to gain the full benefit from practicing mindfulness. Sitting meditation is powerful, and in fact it's the cornerstone of meditative practice of any kind. But in order to both calm the mind and see with clarity, the two major goals of all meditation and spiritual practice, you need to also seek to be mindful during your daily routine. Not just in the morning or at night when you sit down to meditate. If you miss this you could end up with a rather unsuccessful practice and wonder what you're doing wrong.

And still others explain mindfulness in confusing jargon that only certain spiritual or religious groups can understand. Using these words can be OK. But if the author doesn't explain the meaning of the words and the purpose of mentioning them then it won't help you as the reader to understand mindfulness. It will only hurt you and turn you off to the subject. They might mean well, and the information might truly be life-changing, but if the language isn't simple and straightforward then you're just not going to bother.

But worst of all, with mindfulness' rise in popularity in the West it's easy to stumble across an incorrect explanation of how to practice mindfulness and just end up confused and unmotivated. This is the result of the age of the internet. It doesn't take an "expert" (whatever that is) to talk about mindfulness. But one thing is for certain- you shouldn't listen to anyone talk about mindfulness who hasn't made the practice of mindfulness a way of life for themselves. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people out there who seek to comment on mindfulness and profit from it due to its rise in popularity. So as you move forward be careful, and whenever possible use this book, when deciding who to listen to for advice on improving your mindfulness practice.

In order to start you off on the right foot I've organized a list of my best tips and tricks for beginning with mindfulness. These are all the things that I myself have found to be important, or made the mistake of not doing (or both), at the beginning of my own practice. Some of these have to do with adopting a particular mindset, some have to do with the way you actually practice mindfulness, and some have to do with various techniques in themselves. Following even one of these points can greatly improve your practice if you're just starting out. I'd suggest following each point closely.

Tips and tricks for beginning with mindfulness:

1. Focus on developing concentration

We've spoken about the relationship between mindfulness and concentration already, but a very important point to keep in mind is that at the beginning your mind will literally be all over the place. You'll seem to have a new thought or some other distraction every few seconds. This is perfectly normal. I went through the same thing at first. It took time to quiet my own mind, but it was well worth it. Simply quieting the mind can bring you a great sense of peace and happiness. And without calming the mind you won't be able to get into the more advanced levels of mindfulness practice. So it's important, at least at first, to focus on developing concentration. Once your concentration improves you'll be able to put more focus into exercising mindfulness. You'll start noticing why your mind strays (was it a thought or feeling? What was the thought?), as opposed to simply noticing your mind stray and refocusing on your object of meditation.

2. Pick simple objects

In the beginning you're going to want to pick an easy object of meditation. Then, once your skill improves, you can pick more difficult objects. At first, I'd suggest practicing mindful breathing for a couple of weeks. Whether you're at your desk, at a stoplight, in between places, or sitting down for an extended meditation session. Just stop what you're doing and follow your breath with mindfulness. Focus your concentration on each exhale and inhale and let your mind quiet. If your mind seems a bit chaotic, don't worry. This is perfectly normal and might last a few weeks before really beginning to calm down. Refer back to the chapters "Mindful Breathing" and "Mindful Sitting" for detailed instructions on how to practice mindful breathing as sitting meditation and as a practice which can be done throughout your day. After a few weeks you can move on to mindful walking, eating, and many other nourishing practices. But continue to practice formal sitting meditation in the morning and/or night and mindful breathing throughout your day. These are great beginner practices and they'll remain cornerstones of your mindfulness practice even as your skill improves. The reason these are great beginner practices is because they don't require a high level of skill. Walking meditation (or mindful walking) is an example of moving meditation, but it's typically done in a slow manner to where it's easy for a beginner to do. I'd still suggest sticking to mindful breathing for at least the first few weeks though before trying to practice walking meditation at all. Don't rush the process of developing mindfulness. You'll gain nothing from doing so and only end up hurting your practice.

3. **Pick moving objects**

Know that it's best, at first, to pick objects of mindfulness which involve movement. The reason for this is that it's much easier to keep your concentration on something which is constantly changing and moving. The fundamental practices are great because they provide this: breath goes in and out constantly and your steps are well…steps. You can absolutely practice mindfulness of, say, your body while lying down. Simple mindfulness of the body is a very relaxing practice which can help improve the quality of your sleep. But if you're sitting perfectly still then you'll have a hard time in the beginning keeping your concentration. This is just in the beginning though. Once you improve your concentration you'll be able to practice mindfulness of anything with relative ease.

3. **Sit often**

Sitting meditation really is the cornerstone of all meditative practice. It was my first experience with mindfulness and I'd suggest it be your first experience with meditation of any kind. Adopting a daily practice of sitting meditation is very important. If you try to start practicing mindfulness without making sitting meditation a part of your daily practice then it will be much more difficult to get to a point where your mind becomes quiet. And later, sitting meditation will aid in your efforts to obtain a clear mind. No matter how far a Zen monk goes in their practice, they always sit and often two to three times a day. Remember to think of sitting meditation as your practice time to keep you sharp. Every great athlete practices the fundamentals of their craft on a daily basis. No matter how good they become, they practice the fundamentals. For spiritual practice, one of these fundamentals is sitting meditation.

4. **Schedule mindfulness**

As I'll talk about in the next chapter, part of why it's difficult to establish mindfulness as a daily practice is that it's something you do throughout your day as opposed to something you usually plan for or schedule. This is great for obvious reasons, but it also means that in the beginning of your practice you can go entire days and just altogether forget to be mindful of anything. Because of this fact it's important to actually schedule part of your practice, at least at first. This will help you develop your mindfulness, increase the chance of you remembering to be mindful during the rest of your day, and give you a clear marker as to how well you're sticking to your practice. If you missed your sitting meditation session, you know you missed. This will help quite a bit at first, trust me. And it's not a bad idea to continue to schedule mindful time, even if it's just your time for sitting meditation.

5. **Go easy on yourself**

Earlier I talked about the nonjudgmental aspect of mindfulness. Mindfulness is an open acceptance of everything, so those thoughts, feelings, and sensations that keep popping into your mind shouldn't be labelled a bad thing. In fact, they aren't a good thing or a bad thing. Remember, mindfulness is just an observer. You shouldn't be passing judgment, good or bad, on anything including disruptions to your concentration. These distractions are normal. They'll subside for the most part naturally, your mind will quiet over time, and it will bring you a great sense of peace. So don't worry about that. You'll know your practice is really successful not when these distractions subside *but when you start becoming mindful of these distractions*. No matter how many of them you have. Don't get frustrated if at first you can't hold your concentration for more than a few seconds. This is perfectly normal. If you get frustrated just acknowledge the frustration with mindfulness and let it go. Know that these distractions will subside with practice and that your goal is primarily to develop your mindfulness. When you develop the ability to shine the light of mindfulness on these distractions is when the real healing can begin. These disruptions are the things distorting your perception and keeping you from reality as it is, filled with peace, joy, and freedom. No matter what, just keep practicing. With time you'll see the fruits of your labor.

6. **Prioritize mindfulness**

You won't get far in your practice of mindfulness if you don't prioritize it. This goes for anything in life. This is because right from the beginning you'll be clashing with old habits. Remember last chapter when we talked about our habit energy? Keep in mind that our actions contain a certain amount of energy. That is, that the more often we do something the more energy or "pull" it has.

This is our habit energy. We all have this habit energy. What differs from one person to another is where we place this energy.

When you begin practicing mindfulness you'll naturally be "pulled" in other directions constantly. This is your old habit energy attempting to pull you back to your old ways. You can use the other tips and tricks in this chapter, such as making sure to enjoy the process and to pick simple objects of mindfulness, but you'll still need to prioritize your practice. This means, as with establishing any other new habit, you'll have to fight with your old and likely less productive or positive ways. But remember how energy works, the more time and effort you place into something the more pull it will have. Stick with it and gradually it will become easier until the point in which it will take almost no effort at all. And the great thing about mindfulness is that you can do it while doing just about anything. So it's not so much choosing mindfulness over other things, it's more of remembering to be mindful. At first though remember to keep it simple and choose easy objects of mindfulness.

7. **Slow it down**

We're taught to move quickly, multitask, and ultimately be as productive as possible. This mentality is ingrained in us. It probably started during the industrial revolution, where we as a species became obsessed with speed and productivity. It was all about who could grow the fastest and claim the most land. It was inevitable based on our development as a species, but this mindset has stayed with us to the present day and it's completely against our true nature. We're so used to rushing around all day that a lot of times we never even realize there's another way to live. We think that it's "just how life is". But it's not. And of course, part of the point of mindfulness and meditation is to calm the mind. But this job can and should be handled on both sides.

While developing your practice of mindfulness you should also work to become aware of when you're rushing around and when you're not. And aside from helping to calm your mind, if you actively work on slowing down you'll also find more opportunities to practice mindfulness. Because of this it's highly beneficial to analyze your daily schedule. You'll find that opportunities to practice mindfulness are numerous in our daily lives. Walking from point A to point B, sitting in a waiting room, driving to and from work, and just stopping for a moment to follow your breath anywhere and at any time. Slow it down and really start taking the time to enjoy the little moments with mindfulness. It won't take nearly any extra time and very little effort.

8. **Be patient**

Mindfulness takes time and patience to develop. At first, it will be subtle. Unicorns won't start flying through the air and celebration banners won't drop from the sky. You'll just feel....a little more alive. A little more present. That's the best way I can describe it. But with practice you'll notice your ability improve. You'll feel more present, more alive, and better able to notice things with your mindfulness. Of course, you'll need to have some indicator that you're practicing correctly. I covered a few great tips so far, but another good one would be to simply practice mindful breathing and sitting meditation often. These are the easiest ways to practice mindfulness and the method of counting your breath, which you'll do during both of those exercises, is the easiest way to tell when you lose your mindfulness and a great way to tell if you're practicing correctly. Remember, mindfulness works like a muscle. The more you work it out, the stronger it gets. Work patiently towards making mindfulness a way of life and you'll develop it into a powerful force for peace and happiness in your life.

9. **Let go**

When you begin practicing mindfulness you'll probably find it extraordinarily difficult not to become distracted. We covered this earlier, so it shouldn't be of any surprise. But something else will likely happen. You'll have a hard time *convincing yourself* to let go of these distractions. Why is that? Well, we tend to blow everything in our mind out of proportion. What that means is when we have a project due at school, a presentation at work, a big event with the family, or some personal business, we tend to mull over the thing in our heads repeatedly. “Did I remember to do that?” “Did I have them add that?” “What am I going to do about that?” “How is that going to work?” It’s an endless cycle of questions and answers.

When you begin your mindfulness practice you might have a very hard time convincing yourself to let go of these thoughts for even 10 minutes to sit down and meditate. But it’s so important. You might think that you need to keep these things cycling through your brain constantly, otherwise you’ll screw something up or just not do as good a job as you could or should, but that’s not the case. You only minimize your effectiveness in any given task by hounding over it and never giving your mind any rest. You’d be surprised how refreshed and sharp your mind will be if you allow yourself to step away from something for even a single session of mindful breathing or walking meditation. So learn how to let go of these things and just follow your breath. Let go of everything. The more you practice the easier it will be to do this and the better you’ll feel.

10. **Have fun**

You’ve probably heard this one a million times before about a million other things, but that’s because it’s true. It’s not just true, it’s one of the most important points on this list. Why? Because when we enjoy something our drive to do that thing increases tenfold. Luckily, for the most part, this will come naturally when practicing mindfulness. By the very act of practicing mindfulness your monkey mind will begin to settle and you’ll feel an extraordinary sense of tranquility. When I first started practicing mindfulness I felt an amazing sense of peace that seemed to extend throughout the rest of my day. It was rough at first, I can’t say that it wasn’t difficult. Your mind will likely be bouncing around uncontrollably for the first a couple of weeks, you’ll be pretty fidgety, and if you use a timer during sitting meditation you'll find thoughts like "I wonder how much longer I have to go?" popping up regularly. But even so, you'll find yourself feeling great after finishing a session, even if it was just a few minutes long.

During this time you really just have to push through the difficulty. But I don't mean literally push or be forceful. Just be mindful of whatever it is you're being mindful of, in the beginning this will be mostly your breath, and as thoughts arise gently acknowledge them and bring your concentration back to your breath. This tough period won't last long at all and during it you'll still get a lot of joy from practicing. Really take time to notice how mindfulness is improving your mood and behavior. If you take time to do this you'll deepen your appreciation of your practice further and find even more drive to continue practicing.

But the real joy is in once your mind has begun to settle and you can just sit. When you can sit, stop, or walk and be mindful without feeling like you want to get up or like you have something you need to get to, you'll know you've reached a real milestone. I can't describe this feeling to you. You just have to feel it for yourself. It's one of the most beautiful and peaceful feelings you'll ever feel in your life. In those moments everything is perfect just as it is and you feel like you could sit forever.

11. **Just sit**

At first, you might find yourself counting the minutes waiting for your meditation session to be over. This is the wrong mentality. I used to sit down and eventually grow twitchy and fidgety when I knew my session was almost over. If this is happening to you, try not setting a timer for a while. Just sit. If you're too conditioned to "get results" in everything you do then a timer during mindful sitting can be counterproductive at first because all you'll want to do is think "check! That's off my list..." but there's no benefit in that and meditation doesn't work that way. Just sit. After a while this feeling will disappear and instead you'll notice yourself feeling like you could sit forever. And it will feel wonderful.

FAQ 9: I can't sit still, how on earth am I supposed to meditate?

All the more reason to sit! Those who have the most difficulty sitting still are the ones who need mindfulness the most. If you're constantly moving to the point where you can't imagine yourself sitting still for more than a few minutes at a time then your mind is very, very busy. And the busier your mind, the more stressed and anxious you are.

If all you do is learn how to stop and follow your breath from time to time you'll completely transform how you feel on a day to day basis. Those with the most difficulty sitting are typically the ones who end up appreciating the practice the most because they derive the most meaning from it. We often have to learn from experience in order to really appreciate something. If you've experienced a chaotic mind then you'll truly appreciate the peace you find from adopting the practice of mindfulness in your daily life.

Tools of Mindfulness

Shortly after beginning my own mindfulness practice something became glaringly obvious to me: it's really easy to forget to be mindful. And I don't mean for a few minutes, I mean for entire days. Especially if you have a typically busy schedule. This is because one of our most common habit energies is the very semi-conscious state I described earlier in the book. We're so conditioned to live in this semi-conscious state that in the beginning we need to remind ourselves to be mindful constantly in order to establish it as a daily practice. Sure, mindfulness is awesome because you can do it *while* doing anything else you typically do in your daily life. But that's part of the very reason why you need tools to help you establish mindfulness as a daily practice. While you might strive to be mindful whenever walking, without things supporting your practice you'll more than likely just forget and walk wherever you go like you always do. That is, semi-conscious, with a mind dispersed between many thoughts and sensations.

In the last chapter, under item number four titled "Schedule mindfulness", I mentioned how scheduling a specific time frame to be mindful, whether you practice mindful sitting, walking, or something else, helps support and establish your practice. But this only aids in the process. It will still be easy to forget to practice while going about your day. Towards that end, tangible tools like symbols and reminders are something I've made great use of in establishing my own mindfulness practice. Tools of mindfulness are tools which interact with one of the six sense organs: touch, taste, sight, smell, sound, and mind. In Buddhism, mind is considered a "sense organ". I think it helps personal and spiritual development greatly to interpret mind as an organ which receives sensations much the same way as our other traditional sense organs do. Here, I'm talking particularly about either a sound to remind you, a sight to instill feelings in you, an idea to conjure a state of mind in you, or a combination.

In this chapter we'll talk about how to set up reminders (both audio and visual) which naturally help you develop the habit of mindfulness, how to utilize objects as constant objects of mindfulness during your day, and how to create a pocket-sized resource to not only help remind you to practice mindfulness but which also gives you a way to trigger mindfulness during all of your regular daily activities. Again, these are all techniques I myself have used personally and which have helped me develop the practice of mindfulness in my own life. I hope some of these can be of use to you. They were of great use to me!

Symbols of Mindfulness

Symbols can be powerful forms of reinforcement and support. A necklace, a ring, a bracelet, something you keep in your pocket like a rock, or anything else you might think of. It's about creating your own symbol for mindfulness and awakening which you carry on you at all times. It reminds you to be mindful, and it also acts as a sort of refuge. When you touch your symbol of mindfulness, you can enter a state of mindfulness. No matter where you are, no matter what you're doing, your symbol of mindfulness is a great way to bring yourself back to reality and calm your mind and body.

A while back I purchased a small gold lotus pendant, which I still wear to this day. I thought it might be helpful in reminding me to be mindful and of the importance of my spiritual practice as a whole. I decided on the lotus flower because it symbolizes awakening, so it reminds me of my practice and the overall purpose. A symbol which you keep on you throughout your day really is a great way to remind yourself to be mindful. This one thing helped my practice greatly. I personally wasn't used to wearing jewelry of any kind, so if you're like me you'll have to try different things out to see what you prefer. You can also carry something like a small and smooth flat rock. It will fit in your pocket or purse but at the same time be just bulky enough to remind you that it's there from time to time throughout your day.

Whatever symbol you decide on, if you decide to use one then use it wisely. Take it seriously, remember why you're wearing or carrying this symbol. Don't let it just become something you carry which you pass over. Remember, if you're passing over it then you're passing over your practice.

The Bell of Mindfulness

Remember the chapter on mindful breathing? Practicing mindful breathing throughout your day can itself be a great way to develop mindfulness further. By setting reminders on your phone (or tablet, if you carry it on you) or posting a reminder on the wall of a room you step into every day such as your restroom at home or office at work, you can help develop mindfulness as a daily practice. One of the most effective ways I've found of developing mindfulness as a daily practice is by setting up simple alarm reminders on your phone. I'd suggest setting them for the same timeframe I mentioned in the *Mindful Breathing* chapter. Set the alarm to go off every hour and plan to practice mindful breathing for about one minute once the alarm goes off.

I like to use a bell sound set as my alarm sound. Many Buddhist temples have bells, very similar to church bells, which they sound when a session of meditation begins and ends. Every time the bell goes off I imagine the bell sounding at one of these temples and, no matter where I am, transport myself to a place of peace and quiet. When this bell sounds everything stops. I don't listen to the excuses I try to give myself about "oh, let me just finish this one thing", or "I'll get to that in just a minute". I stop everything and just breathe mindfully. No matter where I am I stop. If I'm not comfortable I immediately go somewhere that I am. Just breathe. Let this be your daily vacation time. No matter where you are, for one minute every hour you're transported to a place of pure peace and tranquility. When you come back you'll feel refreshed and ready to tackle anything. And not only that. By doing this one practice you'll be reminded to be mindful throughout the rest of your day.

This one practice was a huge help in developing my daily practice. Not only are you reminding yourself to practice mindful breathing every hour, but because you're practicing mindfulness every hour of every day (I typically have them set to start going off around 8AM since my kids are awake by then, wouldn't want to wake them early…) you gradually begin to remember to practice mindfulness while doing other things throughout your day so it supports the development of your entire practice. But as with all of the tools discussed in this chapter, you need to take it seriously. You might find yourself, for a time, disregarding this alarm. If you find yourself doing this you need to remind yourself why your practice is important, dust yourself off, and just get back on the wagon. It's natural to run into some bumps along the way. So remember, go easy on yourself and just keep chugging along.

Towards that same end you can also post physical signs that you type or handwrite and place them on the wall of rooms you walk into every day such as your restroom, kitchen, office, and even your car. You can write or draw whatever you want on it as long as it reminds you to be mindful during your daily life. For instance, you could have a poster or sign that symbolizes walking meditation in your bedroom that sits on the back of your bedroom door. This way, each time you walk out of your bedroom in the morning you're reminded to walk mindfully. If you tend to rush around at the office and build up most of your stress and anxiety there you can place one on the back of your office door or laminate and place a small one on the surface of your desk. Signs work great. The only thing about them is that if you don't take them seriously from the start it becomes easy to ignore or simply pass over them. Whichever one of these tools you use, you must take them and your overall practice seriously. As I mentioned in the last paragraph, if this is a problem then remind yourself why your practice is important and get back on track. In this case you could always add these reasons to the very sign that reminds you to be mindful. That way, you're simultaneously reminded to practice mindfulness as well as why it's so important to do so in the first place. There's a lot of options for making use of reminders. Do whatever works for you.

The Pocket Book of Mindfulness

When Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh first began his monastic life as a Buddhist monk he was given a small book. The book, "The Essential Discipline for Daily Use", was written by the Zen master Doc The (pronounced "tay") and given to novice monks in order to help them develop the practice of mindfulness. The book, as Nhat Hanh describes it, was no more than 40 pages long from front to back and was made up of short verses which they would recite to themselves while doing specific tasks in order to awaken their minds (i.e. practice mindfulness). The book included verses for each specific activity that a monk or nun might do throughout his or her day. Such as waking up:

Just awakened, I hope that every person will attain great
awareness and see in complete clarity.

And washing their hands…

Washing my hands, I hope that every person will have
pure hands to receive reality.

Thich Nhat Hanh has since expanded on that original idea by adding a few modern meditations of his own such as a telephone meditation and a meditation for riding a bike. The telephone meditation is four lines. You breathe in when reading the first line (silently to yourself), out for the second line, in for the third, and out once more for the fourth:

> Words can travel thousands of kilometers.
> They can build more understanding and love.
> I vow that what I'm going to say is going to promote
> mutual understanding and love.
> And every word I say will be beautiful like flowers.

As you can see, the first two mentioned were one-liners and the third was a full verse. There's no set way to do this, the point is that they're words to help you practice mindfulness and conjure a state of mindfulness and greater awakening. Overall, I loved the idea of the book and thought it would be an incredible tool to help myself develop the practice of mindfulness. So I decided to make my own "Essential Discipline".

Long-term happiness doesn't just fall into your lap. Unless you make the decision to prioritize something, you've got nothing more than a shot in the dark at accomplishing it. But how do you do this with an already busy schedule? Trust me, I know how you feel. I, at the time of writing this, have a nine month old and a three year-old. Just they by themselves are a handful like no other let alone my other responsibilities. But this can be helped by a number of things. We just have to get creative. This is why I liked the idea of "The Essential Discipline for Daily Use" so much. I thought, what if I created my own version of the Zen master's book in order to help me adopt the practice of mindfulness in my everyday life? That was the birth of the pocket book of mindfulness.

Adopting the practice of mindfulness isn't easy, no matter who you are. But this book is the perfect companion for the modern-day man or woman to cultivate the practice of mindfulness whether you lead a busy family life or fast-paced corporate life (and anywhere in between). I liked the idea of having a book which outlined all the various moments throughout the day where one could practice mindfulness and realized that if I did it old school – that is if I literally bought a physical (handheld) notebook and kept it on me at all times- it would be a great way to remind myself to practice mindfulness as well.

Feeling it in your pocket, you're constantly reminded that it's there. Well, turns out, it worked. As soon as I started using it I was not only constantly reminded to practice mindfulness, I knew how to put myself into a state of mindfulness no matter what I was doing. And then I began associating a sense of peace and happiness with the act of taking the book out, which encouraged me to use it to practice mindfulness even more often. Which brings me to the many reasons why the pocket book of mindfulness is a great tool for helping one develop mindfulness.

First, it constantly reminds you to practice mindfulness. It's simple- it's a physical book that you handwrite and keep in your pocket or wallet. It's physically obstructive, or at least noticeable enough that you're constantly reminded to practice mindfulness throughout your day when you sit down or reach for your wallet. What's great too is, after a while of reading and practicing each phrase you'll start to automatically remember to practice and recite the applicable phrase to yourself without even needing the book any longer.

It's also great because it shows you how to practice mindfulness no matter what you're doing: This is the original purpose of the book. Within it exists various short verses, as we discussed earlier, to help you develop your practice of mindfulness. No matter what you're doing the book has a phrase which you can use to take control of your consciousness and enter mindfulness. If you think you'll be taking the book out more often than you're comfortable with at first, don't worry. After a while you'll memorize certain phrases and won't have to take the book out nearly as often.

Lastly, it provides positive reinforcement for your practice. You'll notice that, after a while of using the book, the book itself becomes a symbol of the benefits of your practice. Inner peace, happiness and clarity all become associated with opening your book and reading a verse. This is a great source of reinforcement for your practice. Which, as we talked about earlier, is necessary given how easy it is to forget why we're practicing. If you're constantly reminded of the benefits and beauty of your practice you'll not only continue to practice but your practice will strengthen.

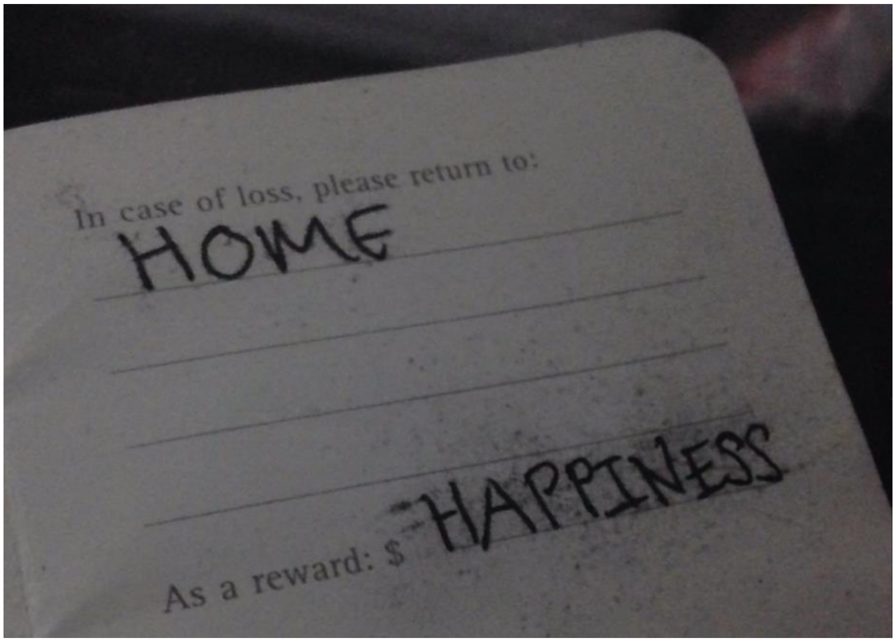
Building Your Own Book of Mindfulness

In order to create your own book of mindfulness you'll just need: a small pocket-sized notebook, a pen, and a little inspiration. For the pocket-sized notebook I'd suggest Moleskine. That's what I made my book with and it's served me perfectly. You can get them at Barnes & Noble if you have one around you, otherwise you can find them easily online. Feel free to use whatever makes you comfortable though, there's absolutely no guidelines to this. You're simply writing verses on paper in a format that allows you to keep it in a noticeable place throughout your day.

Next, you'll need a pen. Nothing special here, right? But I would like to mention two important points which I learned in making my own book. First, try to use a pen that doesn't bleed too much. And second, make sure after writing something to keep the book open for a bit in order to let the ink dry. This isn't a big deal, but as you can see from the images below the ink will really spread unless you do this because of how many times you open and close the book.

And lastly, you can take the verses I have listed below as-is as well as examples for creating verses that apply more specifically to your own life. I listed three examples earlier but below are a few more entries I have in my own book of mindfulness including some verses I created for modern life (driving, the internet).

Home

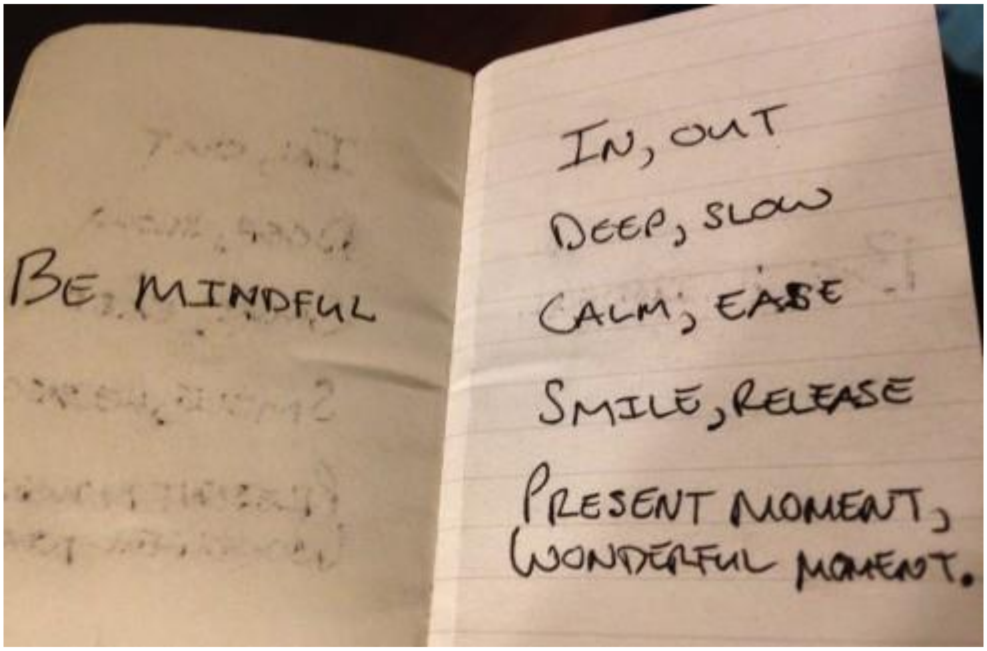


In case of loss, please return to:
HOME

As a reward: $ HAPPINESS

The first page of my book of mindfulness is about the practice of “going home” or returning to yourself. We all lose ourselves in struggles and challenges from time to time, but by practicing mindfulness we can go back to ourselves and regain inner peace and clarity.

Present moment



BE MINDFUL

IN, OUT
DEEP, SLOW
CALM, EASE
SMILE, RELEASE
PRESENT MOMENT,
WONDERFUL MOMENT.

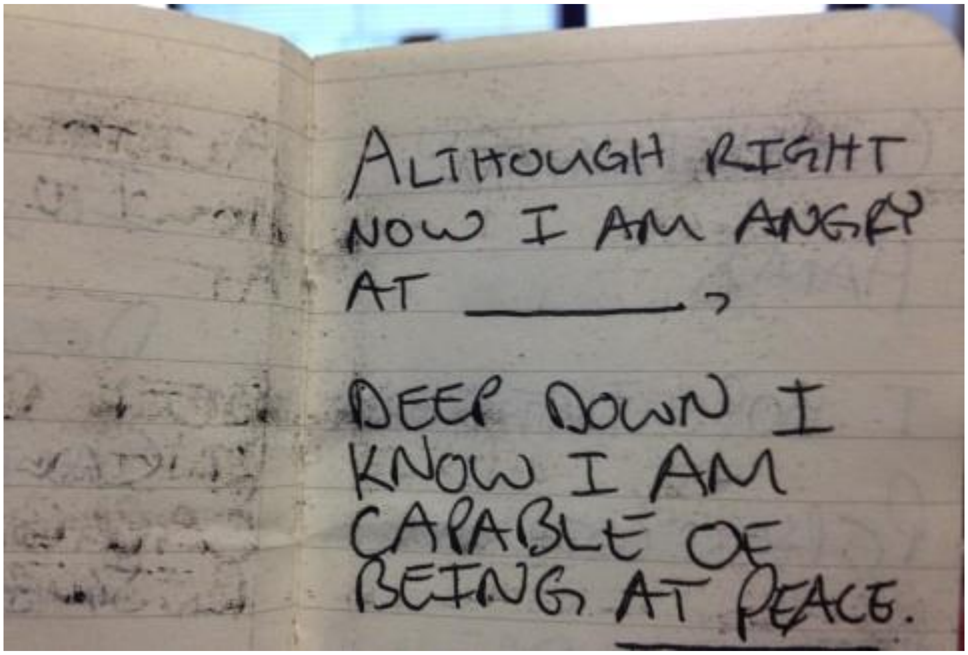
Present moment, wonderful moment is a poem written by Thich Nhat Hanh. I really liked it and thought it would be the perfect verse for stopping and following my breath (when feeling stressed, overwhelmed or needing to calm down for whatever other reason) so I decided to put it at the beginning of the book . I've since used it more than any other verse in the book. Reading it brings me a great sense of inner peace. Each word in the poem up to "release" refers to what you're supposed to do as you breathe in or out. I typically breathe in and out 2-3 times for each line to enhance the practice. Breathe in on the first word of each line and breathe out for the second. Breathe in on "Present moment" and breathe out on "Wonderful moment".

So as you read "deep", make sure you take a deep breath. As you read "slow" make sure you take a slow breath. As you go adopt each new word into your practice. First deep breathing, then slow deep breathing, then as you breathe slowly and deeply calm your body and ease your mind, half-smile to release the tension in your facial muscles and then on "release" imagine yourself releasing all tension and stress from your entire body and mind. Then on

"Present moment, wonderful moment" simply savor the peace of this moment. Relish in the beauty of this moment. You'll never get it back. This is a very calming practice which I've used many times.

In, out
Deep, slow
Calm, ease
Smile, release
Present moment,
Wonderful moment.

Dealing with anger



ALTHOUGH RIGHT
NOW I AM ANGRY
AT ______,

DEEP DOWN I
KNOW I AM
CAPABLE OF
BEING AT PEACE.

This is another verse which I adapted from Thich Nhat Hanh's work as I thought it would be highly useful given the "toolbox" nature of the Book of Mindfulness. I thought, why does the book only have to help with becoming mindful during specific activities? This verse helps you regain hold of your consciousness when anger takes over, no matter what you're doing. Breathe in and out for the first line and in and out again for the second line. After reading the line below you can continue to breathe mindfully until the emotion calms.

Although right now I am angry at _______,
Deep down I know I am capable of being at peace.

Driving meditation

As I place my hands on this wheel I enter a state of mindfulness.
I know I am sitting here, driving this car.
I vow to treat other drivers with patience and compassion.
And I will renew my sense of inner peace with each turn of the wheel.

Internet meditation

As I place my hands on this device I enter a state of mindfulness.
My breath is my companion to the connected world.
I know where I am, what I'm doing and why I'm doing it.
And I vow to consume only those things which nurture my mind.

Working meditation

As I enter this building I also enter a state of mindfulness.
I will treat all tasks with the same level of importance I place on taking care of my boys. (You can fill in the blank here, this is my own)
My breath will guide all important decisions.
I vow to treat others with compassion and will use deep

listening when speaking with teammates.

This is only a sliver of what you can include in your own book. If you really put the work in to utilize the pocket book of mindfulness it can be a valuable tool to advance your practice.

Start Your Adventure

My intention with *The Little Book of Mindfulness* was to provide a resource which broke mindfulness down from A to Z and gave the reader everything they needed to make mindfulness a part of their lives. I *hope The Little Book of Mindfulness* has done just that for you.

In Part 1, we discussed the origins of mindfulness, what mindfulness is, what it isn't, and the benefits or reasons to practice mindfulness. In Part 2, we covered practicing mindfulness through the fundamental activities of mindful sitting, mindful walking, and mindful breathing. We also discussed how to practice mindful eating, cleaning, working in mindfulness, and how to be fully present with mindfulness for experiences with friends and family. And in Part 3, we discussed how to actually make mindfulness a daily practice, or habit. We discussed my best intangible tips and tricks for developing mindfulness as a way of life such as to have fun with it, prioritize your practice, and tips for specific practices, as well as an entire chapter on tangible tools for developing mindfulness such as reminders, symbols, and the pocket book of mindfulness.

But no matter how much value this book has provided for you, it won't amount to anything unless you take action. You can read ten, twenty, even thirty books on mindfulness or anything else in life for that matter. But if you don't then get up and *apply* that knowledge, nothing will change. You'll stay in the same position you're in now with the same level of happiness and fulfillment. Now's the time to take the information within this book and apply it to create positive change in your life. Learn about mindfulness, understand its importance, and then apply both the practices themselves and the tips and tricks to establishing mindfulness as a daily practice that I described in this section.

Take time to practice sitting meditation every day, go for a short mindful walk after work, and breathe mindfully throughout your day. Sit and eat in mindfulness while being fully present for each bite. Be completely present when spending time with family and friends, appreciating their presence and feeling their love. Learn to live deeply and treat every typically mundane activity with reverence and complete attention so as to train yourself to find peace and happiness in the simplest of things by touching the very ground of your being. And open *yourself* up to the light of mindfulness. Let all of your insecurities, deep-seated emotions, and conditions rise to the surface so that you can allow the mind and body's natural healing process to take place.

Mindfulness is meant to be *lived*, not studied. It's about living deeply and seeing into the true nature of yourself and the world around you. So get out there, start really living, and never look back. Shine the light of mindfulness on your entire life. Wherever you go, *be there*. Whatever you do, *do it with you entire being*. Transform your life one moment at a time. This is your life and *it's now or never*. Let mindfulness guide you to a happier, more peaceful, and more harmonious existence. Your adventure starts today.

Peace,
Matt

P.S. Developing mindfulness as a way of life isn't easy, but it's infinitely rewarding. If you need help along the way I'd be more than willing in any way that I can. My home online is my blog Buddhaimonia (buddhaimonia.com). I write new articles weekly and would love to see you stop by sometime. Continued reading and teaching is healthy for any self-development practice and I aim to provide the best content possible towards that purpose. Feel free to leave a comment on an article, message me on Twitter or Google+, or send me an email and I'll do everything I can to help.

The 9 Most Frequently Asked Questions on Mindfulness and Meditation

FAQ 1: What’s the difference between mindfulness and meditation?

At this point you might be wondering: what exactly is the difference between mindfulness and meditation? **Mindfulness is itself a form of meditation.** One of various forms of meditation. Which is why, as you might have noticed, the word meditation has been used in place of, or alongside, mindfulness at various points in the book thus far. There’s just certain more traditional ways of referring to different types of mindfulness practices which can often make things confusing for a beginner.

Mindful sitting is traditionally called sitting meditation, simply meditation, or more recently mindfulness meditation. Mindful walking is traditionally called walking meditation, not mindful walking. Things like this can make it confusing for someone just starting out, especially someone who’s learning on their own without the guidance of a formal teacher, which is common in the age of the internet.

So, if mindfulness is a form of meditation, what exactly is meditation? Meditation covers a pretty broad spectrum of techniques. But there is a central theme. All meditation has to do with developing the mind. In a nutshell, meditation is **a mental technique used to develop or maintain the mind.** Like mindfulness, meditation can be defined in a number of ways. What’s important is just that you get the general idea. Your true understanding of meditation will come when you actually begin to meditate.

FAQ 2: How exactly is slowing down and taking time to do something completely

unrelated to my work supposed to make me more productive?

While productivity isn't the point of mindfulness or life in general, and before anything this should be realized, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter there's nothing necessarily wrong with wanting to be more productive. You just need to understand that there are times and ways that productivity is helpful (positive productivity) and other times and ways where it's harmful (negative productivity). If you figure out how you can get your work done in a third of the time that it used to take you and that allows you to get home to your kids faster each day, that's *positive productivity*. If you decide to start taking your work home and instead of playing with your son you work at the kitchen table all night while your son sits and plays by himself, this is *negative productivity*.

Another example would be that if you decided to stop taking your lunch break in order to get an extra half-hour or hour of work in each day, and consequently never even slightly rest your mind during your average work day, this would be negative productivity because it will actually hinder your performance more than that half-hour or hour of extra work could ever make up for. But worst of all, by doing so you hurt your overall mental well-being. On the other hand, if you were to decide to take part of your half-hour or hour lunch each day and practice mindful sitting for 15-20 minutes, this would be positive productivity. By doing so you'd be giving your mind the best rest it could get in the middle of a work day by completely taking your mind away from work for an extended period of time. This will greatly improve your performance. But best of all, it increases your overall mental well-being.

Positive productivity improves the well-being of yourself and those around you. This can include things that don't have anything to do with your work but instead make you more efficient. By taking a break to do something which will make you sharper, more alert, more optimistic, and/or more energetic you increase your effectiveness, and therefore productivity, in any given task tenfold. Negative productivity harms the well-being of yourself and those around you. Negative productivity often just makes us *feel* more productive and either doesn't make us more productive at all or actually hurts our productivity. If you use these as your guiding principles towards productivity you're sure to become maximally productive while simultaneously improving instead of harming your well-being.

I completely understand the productivity junkie mentality because I was that guy too. I didn't understand the point of doing something completely unrelated to my work or how that could actually make me more productive. I was the epitome of a productivity junkie. Everything I did that I felt wasn't naturally productive towards my work I tried to do at the same time as something that was. When I did work I tried to be as quick as possible and was constantly looking for ways to squeeze more time out of each day to get more work done. It turns out none of those things make you all that more productive. In fact, they can make you far less productive. But when you allow your mind to step away for a period of time from something that's been sitting in your mind and truly rest, you'll notice yourself as being far more creative, effective, and therefore productive when coming back to it. It's just the way the mind works, there's nothing more to it. We need rest. It's completely unhealthy for us to stay on any task for an extended period of time with no rest. A great guiding principle would be to use your mindfulness itself to keep tabs on the condition of your mind while working. If you're trying out things that can make you more productive, but feel your mind becoming stressed as a result of these things, it's probably a good idea to stop doing them.

FAQ 3: How long can I expect to practice before seeing results?

I wouldn't bother worrying about when you're going to see results or not. You shouldn't be so focused on "getting results" when it comes to your spiritual practice or even just mindfulness in itself. Of course, it would be wrong to say that you started your practice for no reason. That just doesn't make any sense. You started wanting something, and this could be called a result. But what I really mean by that is you should be more focused on the practice itself. Know why you began your mindfulness practice, find confirmation of your practice in that and then let go of it. Practice without any expectations. Only once you let go will you obtain the greatest "results". If you keep hanging onto ideas of "I do this because I want to get this in return" then you'll never find true peace.

"OK, but just like you said I'm still going into this because I'm interested in gaining something", you say. I'm sure you, like most others including myself, began or want to begin practicing mindfulness in order to calm your mind and feel more peaceful and happy. If that's the case then you'll feel concrete effects of your practice almost immediately. When I say you can find true peace and happiness *in this moment*, I mean it. Of course, you'll need to develop your ability to experience the greatest results.

In all likelihood your first couple of weeks will be tough. You'll experience your monkey mind at its greatest intensity. Ultimately it all depends on how quiet (or loud) your mind is going into practice. Either way, don't judge yourself. It doesn't matter how quiet or loud your mind is, just that you practice diligently. For the most part, the "rewards" exist in the very moment of practicing and not in some far-off goal. This is an important lesson to learn. With mindfulness you'll learn to appreciate the present moment as it is in all its beauty

For me in my own practice, in the beginning seeing my mind gradually quiet and feeling the increasing sense of peace within myself as my practice developed was more than enough confirmation and encouragement for me to keep practicing. That started happening after just a few weeks and was rather significant.

FAQ 4: Can't I just sit down however I want when I meditate? Do I have to sit in the full-lotus

in order to get the greatest benefit from sitting meditation?

No, you don’t have to sit in any particular position. The purpose of the full lotus is simply that it’s the most stable sitting position available to us. When you sit in the full lotus while being supported by a proper cushion you’ll see what I mean. In the full lotus you feel extremely stable. Even more stable than sitting in a chair.

You can meditate in whatever sitting position you’d like. But be careful, a stable sitting position and proper posture are very important in a regular meditation practice. The full lotus is the most stable position by far and, once you get used to it, a very comfortable position to meditate in. Because of the stability of the full lotus it also removes potential bodily distractions from sitting meditation. You’re free to let your mind and body vanish and simply sit with your breath.

You should strive to eventually sit in the full lotus. This is a difficult position to sit in even with practice for some which is why I mentioned earlier in the chapter that you can sit in the half lotus or even sit cross-legged or on a chair if neither of those are comfortable for you. In no way is any specific sitting position a requirement. Don’t let anyone tell you so. Sit in whatever position you can and meditate diligently.

FAQ 5: The same thought keeps coming into my mind while meditating, what does it mean?

Don’t worry, this is normal. Because everything is an object of your consciousness, mindfulness is really about becoming fully aware of your own complete body and mind. Your thoughts and emotions being a part of that. If the same thought keeps creeping into your mind during meditation, then, as you do with any thought, simply acknowledge it each time it comes to the surface and then bring your focus back to your breath. Do this as many times as necessary. You’re letting the emotion run its course.

Whether it’s a specific fear, anger, or some limiting belief, this is a good thing because it’s a clear sign that your mindfulness is improving.

If you stick to your practice you will slowly and gently unfold your mind, watching all your fear, anger and stress dissipate. This is why it’s important to practice mindfulness in your everyday life. Even if you meditate every single day it won’t be enough. You need to work on being mindful during your everyday life in order to uncover all the various afflictions blocking you from experiencing the ultimate level of peace and happiness.

FAQ 6: Everywhere I read I’m being told to acknowledge the thought and then “let it go”. What does that even mean?

What’s important is that you acknowledge the thought with mindfulness. By acknowledging the thought with mindfulness that in itself is a nonjudgmental action. You aren't judging the thought or yourself for having the thought. By "let it go" the teacher is probably often referring to the nonjudgmental aspect of mindfulness, whether they realize it or not. It's not a bad description, I like it myself because it reminds one of the nonjudgmental aspect of mindfulness, but more detail needs to be given of the action instead of just "let it go".

The only action that will precede acknowledging the thought with mindfulness will be you bringing your concentration back to the object of mindfulness, be it your breath, steps, broom, dishes, food, or whatever you're being mindful of. Essentially, because mindfulness is itself by nature nonjudgmental, there will be no letting go. There will simply be no clinging. Mindfulness is what observes the thought, but mindfulness does not grab hold of anything in the first place. So there is nothing to let go of.

More often than not the same thought will reappear constantly. Instead of trying to kindly get the elephant out the door, only to find him resisting, imagine yourself talking to a giraffe and the elephant just walks up and interrupts you. Bringing your concentration back to your object of mindfulness isn't letting the thought go, it's simply turning away from the elephant and continuing your conversation with the giraffe. Yes, the elephant will continue to try and interrupt. But simply being with these interruptions in order to heal them is the very nature of meditative practice. It will take some time to heal. Just keep sitting and be with the elephant. Don't make him leave, just sit with him and eventually he'll calm down and stop interrupting you. When this happens, the thought or emotion (the elephant) will have subsided.

FAQ 7: How do I know when I’m practicing mindfulness?

At first, you’re going to be confused as to whether or not you’re really practicing mindfulness. So, you’re supposed to read some words on a page and then just....hope you’re doing it right? That’s where faith comes in. I don’t mean faith in a higher power, but I am talking about belief in something. In this case, that means belief in the teaching or instruction of this book. Trust the instruction in this book and just practice. Keep practicing and, with time, you’ll get the hang of it.

There are some good ways to identify that you’re practicing correctly. The best place to start is with what I mentioned on point 6 in the *Mindfulness is…* chapter, but there are some questions you can ask yourself to further ensure you’re practicing correctly. Ask yourself these questions once you’ve been practicing for a few weeks (the answer to each of these is likely to be yes if you’re practicing correctly):

Q1: Do I feel happier and more at peace than I did before I started practicing mindfulness?

Q2: Do I feel less stress and mental exhaustion than before?

Q3: Am I feeling less angry and more patient than I did before?

Q4: While being mindful, am I sensing the interruptions that arise in my mind and body?

Q5: When I become mindful, do I feel like I just turned the light switch on to my life?

Q1-Q3 are clear indicators that you're not only practicing mindfulness but that you're practice is working.

If you answered no to Q4, you might be concentrating too hard. That is, forcing your concentration to the point where you'll give yourself a headache. Softly direct your concentration to the object of mindfulness and softly redirect it when your concentration lapses.

And in regards to Q5, remember that mindfulness is a conscious decision. The moment you decide to become mindful is a conscious decision, and an act, committed by you. You should feel an immediate change in your awareness when making this conscious decision.

FAQ 8: I often go days without remembering to practice mindfulness. I feel like it's just not working for me. What am I supposed to do?

Tackling that very good question is the very purpose of Part 3. This is something you'll undoubtedly encounter when beginning to develop mindfulness as a daily practice. The chapter *Tools of Mindfulness* is about just that- overcoming our natural ability to forget to practice. Most of us are pretty busy. And so it can be really easy to let an entire day go by and forget to practice mindfulness altogether when we're used to rushing around from the time we wake up until the time we lay our heads down to rest. If you use one or more of the techniques I outline in *Tools of Mindfulness* chapter then eventually your practice will grow and you'll be practicing on a daily basis.

You might notice during this time that you begin to slow down. I mean that you begin to move more slowly throughout your day than you did previously. And yet, you'll be getting more done. This is one of the beautiful benefits of mindfulness. Mindfulness will help you realize that all that rushing around never made you more productive. And now you have a better way.

FAQ 9: I can't sit still, how on earth am I supposed to meditate?

All the more reason to sit! Those who have the most difficulty sitting still are the ones who need mindfulness the most. If you're constantly moving to the point where you can't imagine yourself sitting still for more than a few minutes at a time then your mind is very, very busy. And the busier your mind, the more stressed and anxious you are.

If all you do is learn how to stop and follow your breath from time to time you'll completely transform how you feel on a day to day basis. Those with the most difficulty sitting are typically the ones who end up appreciating the practice the most because they derive the most meaning from it. We often have to learn from experience in order to really appreciate something. If you've experienced a chaotic mind then you'll truly appreciate the peace you find from adopting the practice of mindfulness in your daily life.

Thank You

The truth is, we may or may not ever meet one another. We may never speak. The world is a big place and I won't ever know and definitely won't ever be able to meet everyone who reads my work. So it's because of this that I wanted to take a second to say thank you. A big thank you. Even if we never meet again I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate you taking the time to read *The Little Book of Mindfulness*. It means so much to me that you took the time to sit down and read my work. From the bottom of my heart, *thank you*.

I worked harder than I ever have in my life to write *The Little Book of Mindfulness*. Despite being in the middle of moving my family to a new home, raising my two wild boys (who, at the time of writing this, are 9 months and 3 years old), working 40 hours a week, growing and maintaining my blog, and a whole list of other responsibilities, I finished the book and made it out in one piece. But it took a lot from more than just me. I also wanted to thank my wife Edith. She's been the best mommy to our two little dudes and been nothing but supportive of my work from day one. She, before anyone else, told me I should write. I also wanted to thank my mom for always being there. She's been nothing but supportive from day one as well. She and my wife were my first two readers on Buddhaimonia, before anyone else even knew it existed.

A quick note about distributing The Little Book of Mindfulness:

Feel free to distribute this to friends, family, and acquaintances. Just do me a favor and either direct them to buddhaimonia.com so that they can have a chance to sign up to my email list and get their own copy or at least let them know where you got it. I bring out a lot of free content on my blog, but with a family of four that depends on me to put food on the table, and a dream of someday being able to write fulltime, I can't do this completely for free. Your time is precious, so I appreciate that you’ve decided to spend some of that time with me and *The Little Book of Mindfulness*.

Thank you!

About the Author

Author Matt Valentine

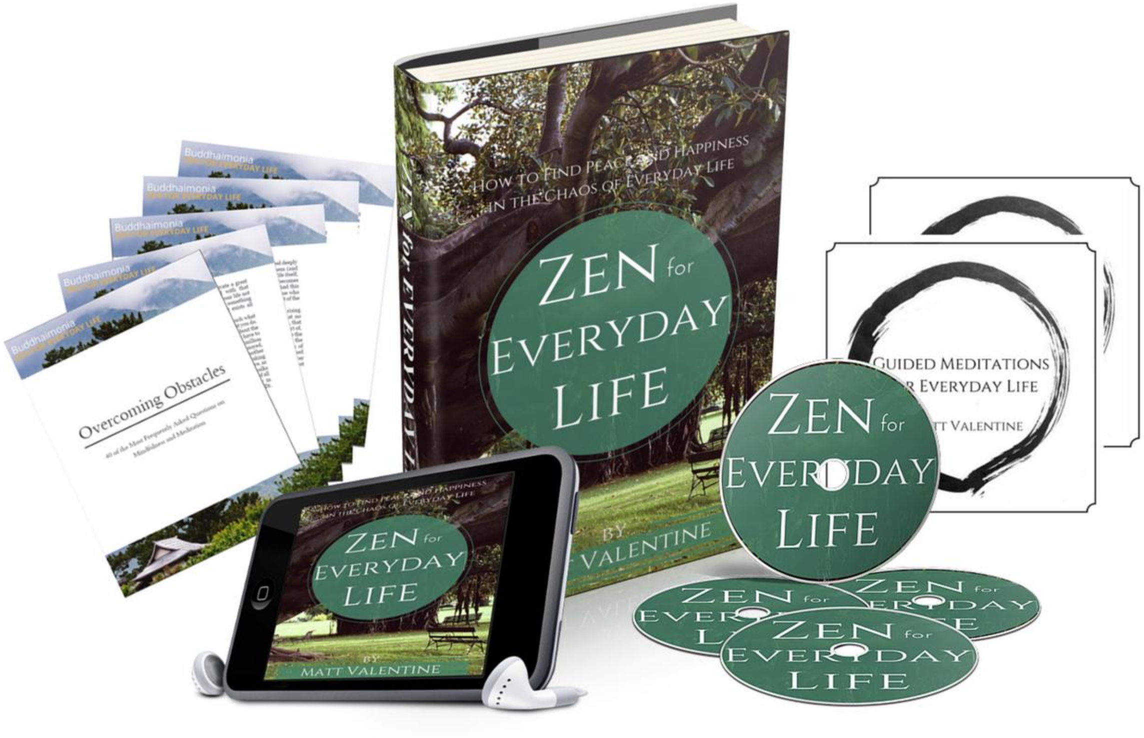
Matt Valentine is the founder of Buddhaimonia (Buddhaimonia.com) and a self-published author. He writes weekly on his blog about life or “spiritual” development at large including a range of topics such as mindfulness, meditation, conscious living, self-mastery, relationships, overcoming obstacles, and releasing ourselves from attachment (letting go). Matt believes that spirituality is simply about learning how to live deeply in the present moment and that by doing so we can discover the greatest gifts that life can offer.

Matt lives with his family in Los Angeles, California. You can learn more about Matt at Buddhaimonia.com/about.

More from Matt Valentine

Zen for Everyday Life

How to Find Peace and Happiness in the Chaos of Everyday Life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How to Find Peace and Happiness in the Chaos of Everyday Life
ZEN for EVERYDAY LIFE
by Matt Valentine
Guided Meditations for Everyday Life

"You'll find peace and happiness within your own mind, in the heart of the chaos of your everyday life, and Zen for Everyday Life *is about showing you how to do that."* – ***Zen for Everyday Life,* Page 17**

My second book, *Zen for Everyday Life,* takes over where *The Little Book of Mindfulness* leaves off. It provides **a clear and straightforward path** to cultivating peace, happiness, and greater meaning in your life. It shows you **step-by-step how to apply literally dozens of simple meditation techniques** to what you already do in your everyday life. By doing so it equips you with the skills you need to cultivate greater peace, joy, and a deep sense of meaning within your own life and on your own terms.

Zen for Everyday Life will help you take principles that have been used in Zen and other universal wisdom traditions for thousands of years and apply them to your everyday life, ***no matter how chaotic or busy your life is***. It's ultimately about **showing you how to turn your entire life into one continuous, beautiful, and peace-filled meditation**, even the most seemingly mundane activities of your everyday life.

15 Benefits of *Zen for Everyday Life*

Zen for Everyday Life is packed full of value. With over 40 meditations and exercises as well as countless tips, tricks, and strategies, with *Zen for Everyday Life* you will:

- ✓ **Learn how to cultivate a great sense of joy** in even the most mundane and ordinary activities of your everyday life.
- ✓ **Discover a refreshing sense of freedom** in the midst of the craziness of your everyday life.
- ✓ **Find peace in all areas of your life** and learn how to maintain that sense of peace for the rest of your life.
- ✓ **Unlock a happiness not bound by temporary or limited pleasures**, but based on a tranquil and clear mind which can withstand the tests of life.
- ✓ **Learn how to improve communication** with loved ones and better nurture your relationships.
- ✓ **Uncover a deep sense of meaning** in your life and realize fulfillment.
- ✓ **Learn ways to uncover deep-seated fears and limiting beliefs.**
- ✓ **Gain the skills and knowledge to motivate yourself** to action even when you feel like quitting.
- ✓ **Show up to life-** realize the beauty of your life as it is right now in the present moment.
- ✓ **Discover how to cultivate greater confidence** in your own abilities.
- ✓ **Reconnect with your true self** and revive your inner child.
- ✓ **Overcome negative self-talk** and realize everything you need to live fully.
- ✓ **Find time you never knew you had.**

- ✓ **Create a daily practice that nourishes your mind and body.**
- ✓ Discover how to look deeply into the experiences of your everyday life to **cultivate a sense of gratitude and a reverence for life.**

What's in *Zen for Everyday Life*?

Whether you'd like to sit down and read the eBook, listen to the audiobook on the go, or even prefer the feel of a real paperback, there's a version for you. *Zen for Everyday Life* comes as **a 298-page eBook as well as paperback edition and an over 6 hour audiobook edition, both packed with more than 40 meditations and exercises** that will help you bring greater peace, happiness, and meaning into your life at the deepest level.

So, what are you waiting for? If you liked *The Little Book of Mindfulness*, then you're going to love *Zen for Everyday Life*. *Zen for Everyday Life* will help you take your mindfulness and meditation practice to a whole different level, and as a result, help you find greater peace and happiness even amidst the chaos and craziness of your everyday life. This is your life, right here, and right now. Make the decision to prioritize your peace and happiness and watch all other things in your life (and the lives of those around you) become transformed:

Click here to get Zen for Everyday Life

1-on-1 Training and Guidance with Matt Valentine

1-on-1
Training &
Guidance
with Matt Valentine

What’s holding you back from living your best life?

- **Inner obstacles.** What’s baring down on you each day? What personal obstacles, like negative self-talk or a lack of confidence, are you facing? Do you wish you had a way to overcome these things and find peace and a true sense of joy in your life?

- **Meaning and purpose.** Do you lack a sense of meaning in your life? Do you wish you could wake up each day with a reverence for life and a sense that what you do matters?
- **Stress and anxiety.** Is stress and anxiety getting to be too much to handle? What if there was a way to not just manage stress and anxiety, but remove it altogether?
- **Uncertainty in your life path.** Are you having a hard time figuring out what you want to do with your life? Do you feel stuck because you just can't figure out what your next step should be?
- **Habits.** Do you feel your daily habits are what's really holding you back? That if you could just change what you do each day you'd be able to change your life for the better?

Life really is one big and amazing adventure. Sometimes, it might not seem like it though. Sometimes, it can seem downright tough and unforgiving. We all experience it at some point in our lives, and the majority of people go their entire lives believing that life is nothing more than that. ***But it's so much more.***

- ✓ *What if you could wake up each day with a deep sense of appreciation for the precious new 24 hours you've been given?*
- ✓ *What if you could go about your day with confidence, knowing why you do what you do and how you contribute to the betterment of the world around you?*
- ✓ *What if you could overcome your negative self-talk and doubt and find a strength within yourself you never knew existed?*
- ✓ *And what if you could overcome bad habits and completely transform your life from the very foundation up by adopting new positive ones to take their place?*

You can only do so much by yourself. In fact, we depend on countless people and things each and every day just to go about our usual daily lives. That's where I come in. I'm here to help you with each and every one of the points I covered above and more. Whatever you want to call it, training, guidance, or life coaching, it's powerful for a number of reasons.

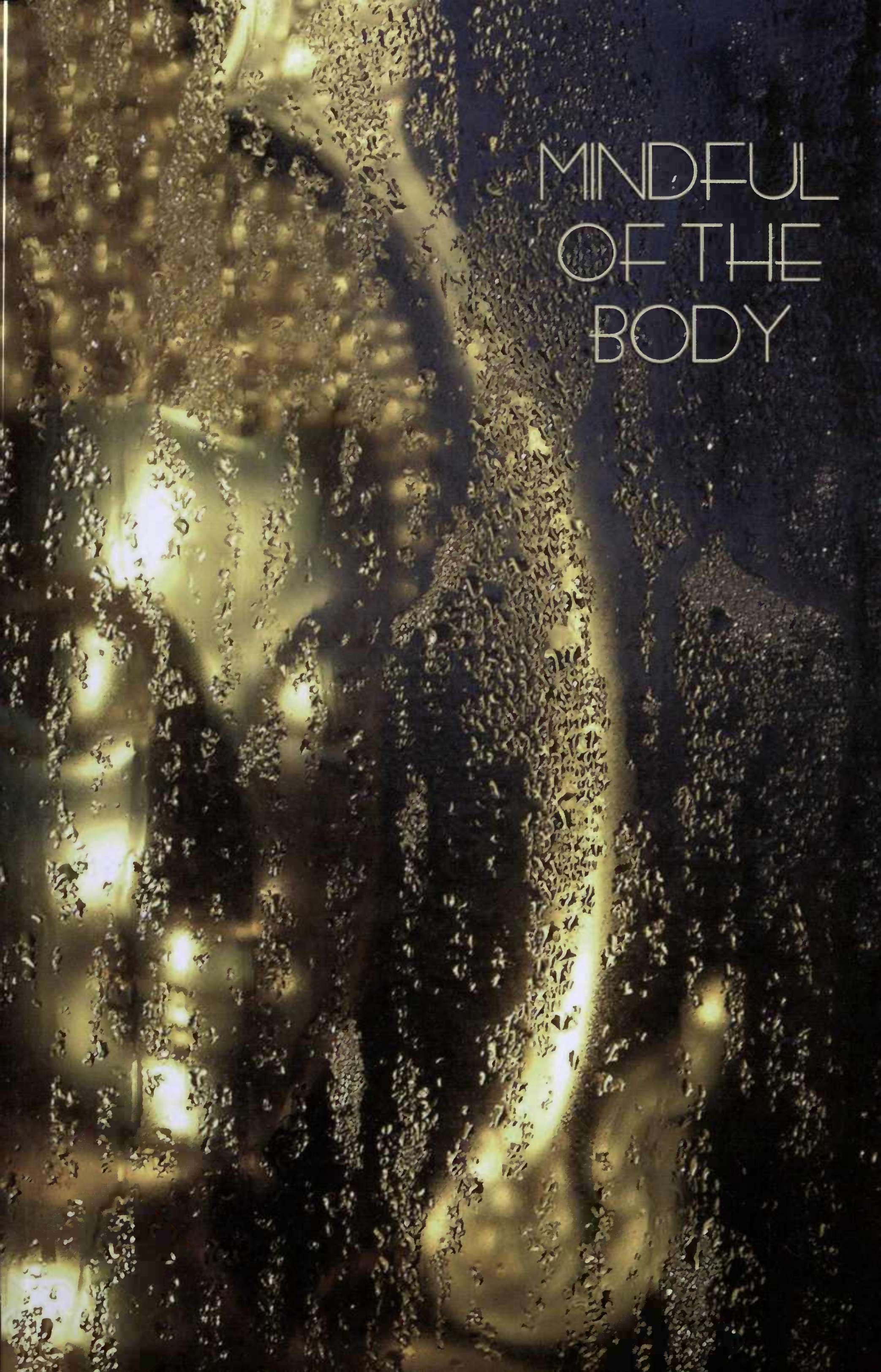
Don't think you need to work 1-on-1 with someone to improve the quality of your life? You don't. I'm not going to sit here and feed you a bunch of bull. And don't let anyone convince you otherwise.

BUT, to say it's not highly useful, even *critical* for those wanting to get the most out of life, is like saying there's no point to a physical trainer, or a drill instructor, or all those professional coaches in the NBA, NFL, and every other sport in existence, or a teacher of ANY kind.

The reality is, ***you can learn with a teacher in one month what will take you years to learn on your own (if ever).*** And on top of that, a teacher or coach can help guide you when you've lost your way even after you've arrived at where you want to be. There's so many reasons why it's beneficial, which is why I've decided to open up this service to my readers.

Want more information?

Click here to learn more about 1-on-1 Training Guidance with Matt Valentine



MINDFUL OF THE BODY

Mindful of the Body

A STUDY GUIDE

prepared by

Thanissaro Bhikkhu

for free distribution

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Introduction

ALTHOUGH EARLY BUDDHISM is widely believed to take a negative attitude toward the body, the texts of the Pali Canon do not support this belief. They approach the body both in its positive role, as an object of meditation to develop mindfulness, concentration, and the mental powers based on concentration; and in its negative role as an object for unskillful states of mind. Even in its negative role, the body is not the culprit: the problem is the mind's attachment to the body. Once the body can be used in its positive role to develop mindfulness and concentration, those mental qualities can be used to free the mind of its attachments to the body. Then, as many a modern meditation master has noted, the mind and body can live in peace.

This study guide focuses on the primary sutta in the Pali Canon dealing with the contemplation of the body: The Discourse on Mindfulness Immersed in the Body (MN 119). The first section, The Context, establishes the general principles underlying the practice of mindfulness immersed in the body, showing why attachment to the body is considered problematic in the first place. The second section presents the sutta itself. The remaining sections expand on points raised in the sutta: Section Three dealing with the advantages of practicing mindfulness immersed in the body, and Section Four expanding on the drawbacks of attachment to the body.

Because the sutta treats the body both as an object of mindfulness and as an object of *jhana*, or mental absorption, it raises questions concerning the relationship between these two mental qualities in the practice of meditation.

There is a widespread belief that they represent two sides of a great divide in Buddhist meditation practice, with mindfulness on one side, joined with *vipassana* (insight) and discernment; and jhana on the other side joined with *samatha* (tranquility). The Pali Canon, however, presents a much more complex picture of the interrelated roles these mental qualities in the pursuit of Awakening. And in fact, the "Great Divide" picture of Buddhist meditation practice conflates what the Pali Canon treats as three separate, albeit related issues: the relationship between samatha and vipassana, the relationship between mindfulness and jhana, and the relationship between jhana and discernment.

To convey the original parameters of these issues, this study guide ends with three sections focused separately on these relationships. The first, Samatha/Vipassana, shows how these terms refer not to separate classes of meditative exercises but to qualities of mind that ideally are developed in tandem as a necessary part of jhana practice—both prior to and building on the attainment of jhana. The next section, Mindfulness/Jhana, similarly shows how the practice of jhana and the practice of the four establishings of mindfulness—also called the four frames of reference—are not radically separate. Instead, mindfulness practice is used specifically to develop jhana, whereas jhana practice—on the attainment of the fourth jhana—brings mindfulness to a state of purity. The final section, Jhana/Discernment—shows how the attainment of jhana is used as a necessary basis for the development of liberating insight. This section concludes with a passage from MN 121 that ties all these themes together, showing how tranquility and insight mindfully act in tandem (see AN IV.94) to develop and purify jhana states in such a way as to foster the discernment that issues in release.

I. The Context

"Monks, I lived in refinement, utmost refinement, total refinement. My father even had lotus ponds made in our palace: one where red-lotuses bloomed, one where white lotuses bloomed, one where blue lotuses bloomed, all for my sake. I used no sandalwood that was not from Varanasi. My turban was from Varanasi, as were my tunic, my lower garments, & my outer cloak. A white sunshade was held over me day & night to protect me from cold, heat, dust, dirt, & dew.

"I had three palaces: one for the cold season, one for the hot season, one for the rainy season. During the four months of the rainy season I was entertained in the rainy-season palace by minstrels without a single man among them, and I did not once come down from the palace. Whereas the servants, workers, & retainers in other people's homes are fed meals of lentil soup & broken rice, in my father's home the servants, workers, & retainers were fed wheat, rice, and meat.

"Even though I was endowed with such fortune, such total refinement, the thought occurred to me: 'When an untaught, run-of-the-mill person, himself subject to aging, not beyond aging, sees another who is aged, he is horrified, humiliated, & disgusted, oblivious to himself that he too is subject to aging, not beyond aging. If I—who am subject to aging, not beyond aging—were to be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted on seeing another person who is aged, that would not be fitting for me.' As I noticed this, the [typical] young person's intoxication with youth entirely dropped away.

"Even though I was endowed with such fortune, such total refinement, the thought occurred to me: 'When an untaught, run-of-the-mill person, himself subject to illness, not beyond illness, sees another who is ill, he is horrified, humiliated, & disgusted, oblivious to himself that he too is subject to illness, not beyond illness. And if I—who am subject to illness, not beyond illness—were to be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted on seeing another person who is ill, that would not be fitting for me.' As I noticed this, the healthy person's intoxication with health entirely dropped away.

"Even though I was endowed with such fortune, such total refinement, the thought occurred to me: 'When an untaught, run-of-the-mill person, himself subject to death, not beyond death, sees another who is dead, he is horrified, humiliated, & disgusted, oblivious to himself that he too is subject to death, not beyond death. And if I—who am subject to death, not beyond death—were to be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted on seeing another person who is dead, that would not be fitting for me.' As I noticed this, the living person's intoxication with life entirely dropped away.

"Monks, there are these three forms of intoxication. Which three? Intoxication with youth, intoxication with health, intoxication with life.

"Drunk with the intoxication of youth, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.

"Drunk with the intoxication of health, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.

"Drunk with the intoxication of life, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell…."

—*AN III.39*

"Before my Awakening, when I was still an unawakened Bodhisatta, being subject myself to birth, aging, illness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I sought [happiness in] what was subject to birth, aging, illness, death, sorrow, and defilement. The thought occurred to me: 'Why am I, being subject myself to birth...defilement, seeking what is subject to birth...defilement? What if I...were to seek the unborn, unaging, unailing, undying, sorrowless, undefiled, unsurpassed security from bondage: Unbinding.'"

—*MN 26*

"I tell you, friend, that it isn't possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear. But at the same time, I tell you that there is no making an end of suffering & stress without reaching the end of the cosmos. Yet it is just within this fathom-long body, with its perception & intellect, that I declare that there is the cosmos, the origination of the cosmos, the cessation of the cosmos, and the path of practice leading to the cessation of the cosmos."

—*AN IV.45*

"Now this is the noble truth of stress: Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

"And this is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

"And this is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

"And this is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"'This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended' ... 'This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned' ... 'This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly experienced' ... 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed'…."

—SN LVI.11

"And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge with regard to stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the stopping of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the stopping of stress: This, monks, is called right view.

"And what, monks, is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness: This, monks, is called right resolve.

"And what, monks, is right speech? Abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from abusive speech, abstaining from idle chatter: This, monks, is called right speech.

"And what, monks, is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual intercourse: This, monks, is called right action.

"And what, monks, is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This, monks, is called right livelihood.

"And what, monks, is right effort? (i) There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (ii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandonment of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. (iii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (iv) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This, monks, is called right effort.

"And what, monks, is right mindfulness? (i) There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, aware, & mindful—putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. (ii) He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, aware, & mindful—putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. (iii) He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, aware, & mindful—putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. (iv) He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, aware, & mindful—

putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. This, monks, is called right mindfulness.

"And what, monks, is right concentration? (i) There is the case where a monk—quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful (mental) qualities—enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. (ii) With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. (iii) With the fading of rapture, he remains in equanimity, mindful & fully aware, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' (iv) With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This, monks, is called right concentration."

—SN XLV.8

◆

II. Mindfulness Immersed in the Body

Kāyagatā-sati Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya 119)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Savatthi at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Now at that time a large number of monks, after the meal, on returning from their alms round, had gathered at the meeting hall when this discussion arose: "Isn't it amazing, friends! Isn't it astounding!—the extent to which mindfulness immersed in the body, when developed & pursued, is said by the Blessed One who knows, who sees—the worthy one, rightly self-awakened—to be of great fruit & great benefit." And this discussion came to no conclusion.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the meeting hall and, on arrival, sat down on a seat made ready. As he was sitting there, he addressed the monks: "For what topic are you gathered together here? And what was the discussion that came to no conclusion?"

"Just now, lord, after the meal, on returning from our alms round, we gathered at the meeting hall when this discussion arose: 'Isn't it amazing, friends! Isn't it astounding!—the extent to which mindfulness immersed in the body, when developed & pursued, is said by the Blessed One who knows, who sees—the worthy one, rightly self-awakened—to be of great fruit & great benefit.' This was the discussion that had come to no conclusion when the Blessed One arrived."

[The Blessed One said:] "And how is mindfulness immersed in the body developed, how is it pursued, so as to be of great fruit & great benefit?

"There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"Breathing in long, he discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, he discerns that he is breathing out long. Or breathing in short, he discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, he discerns that he is breathing out short. He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the entire body and to breathe out sensitive to the entire body. He trains himself to breathe in calming bodily fabrication (the breath) and to breathe out calming bodily fabrication. And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Furthermore, when walking, the monk discerns that he is walking. When standing, he discerns that he is standing. When sitting, he discerns that he is sitting. When lying down, he discerns that he is lying down. Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it. And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Furthermore, when going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away...when bending & extending his limbs...when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl...when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring...when urinating & defecating...when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert. And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Furthermore, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.' Just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain—wheat, rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice—and a man with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, 'This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans. These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice'; in the same way, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.' And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Furthermore, the monk contemplates this very body—however it stands, however it is disposed—in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property.' Just as a skilled butcher or his apprentice, having killed a cow, would sit at a crossroads cutting it up into pieces, the monk contemplates this very body—however it stands, however it is disposed—in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property.' And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground—one day, two days, three days dead—bloated, livid, & festering, he applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate'...

"Or again, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground, picked at by crows, vultures, & hawks, by dogs, hyenas, & various other creatures...a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons...a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected with tendons...a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons... bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions—here a hand bone, there a foot bone, here a shin bone, there a thigh bone, here a hip bone, there a back bone, here a rib, there a chest bone, here a shoulder bone, there a neck bone, here a jaw bone, there a tooth, here a skull...the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells...piled up, more than a year old...decomposed into a powder: He applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

THE FOUR JHANAS

"Furthermore, quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, he enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal. Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without—would nevertheless not drip; even so, the monk permeates ... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of withdrawal. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal. And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Then, with the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of composure. Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from the east, west, north, or south, and with the skies supplying abundant showers time & again, so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate & pervade, suffuse & fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; even so, the monk permeates ... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of composure. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of composure. And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Then, with the fading of rapture, he remains in equanimity, mindful & alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. Just as in a lotus pond, some of the lotuses, born & growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated & pervaded, suffused & filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, the monk permeates ... this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture. And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

"Then, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity &

mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness. And as he remains thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, any memories & resolves related to the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning his mind gathers & settles inwardly, grows unified & centered. This is how a monk develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

FULLNESS OF MIND

"Monks, whoever develops & pursues mindfulness immersed in the body encompasses whatever skillful qualities are on the side of clear knowing. Just as whoever pervades the great ocean with his awareness encompasses whatever rivulets flow down into the ocean, in the same way, whoever develops & pursues mindfulness immersed in the body encompasses whatever skillful qualities are on the side of clear knowing.

"In whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is not developed, not pursued, Mara gains entry, Mara gains a foothold.

"Suppose that a man were to throw a heavy stone ball into a pile of wet clay. What do you think, monks—would the heavy stone ball gain entry into the pile of wet clay?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"In the same way, in whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is not developed, not pursued, Mara gains entry, Mara gains a foothold.

"Now, suppose that there were a dry, sapless piece of timber, and a man were to come along with an upper firestick, thinking, 'I'll light a fire. I'll produce heat.' What do you think—would he be able to light a fire and produce heat by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the dry, sapless piece of timber?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"In the same way, in whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is not developed, not pursued, Mara gains entry, Mara gains a foothold.

"Now, suppose that there were an empty, hollow water-pot set on a stand, and a man were to come along carrying a load of water. What do you think—would he get a place to put his water?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"In the same way, in whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is not developed, not pursued, Mara gains entry, Mara gains a foothold.

"Now, in whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is developed, is pursued, Mara gains no entry, Mara gains no foothold. Suppose that a man were to throw a ball of string against a door panel made entirely of heartwood. What do you think—would that light ball of string gain entry into that door panel made entirely of heartwood?"

"No, venerable sir."

"In the same way, in whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is developed, is pursued, Mara gains no entry, Mara gains no foothold.

"Now, suppose that there were a wet, sappy piece of timber, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, 'I'll light a fire. I'll produce heat.' What do you think—would he be able to light a fire and produce heat by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the wet, sappy piece of timber?"

"No, venerable sir."

"In the same way, in whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is developed, is pursued, Mara gains no entry, Mara gains no foothold.

"Now, suppose that there were a water-pot set on a stand, full of water up to the brim so that crows could drink out of it, and a man were to come along carrying a load of water. What do you think—would he get a place to put his water?"

"No, lord."

"In the same way, in whomever mindfulness immersed in the body is developed, is pursued, Mara gains no entry, Mara gains no foothold.

AN OPENING TO THE HIGHER KNOWLEDGES

"When anyone has developed & pursued mindfulness immersed in the body, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

"Suppose that there were a water jar, set on a stand, brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to tip it in any way at all, would water spill out?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, when anyone has developed & pursued mindfulness immersed in the body, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

"Suppose there were a rectangular water tank—set on level ground, bounded by dikes—brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to loosen the dikes anywhere at all, would water spill out?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, when anyone has developed & pursued mindfulness immersed in the body, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

"Suppose there were a chariot on level ground at four crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, waiting with whips lying ready, so that a skilled driver, a trainer of tamable horses, might mount and—taking the reins with his left hand and the whip with his right—drive out & back, to whatever place & by whichever road he liked; in the same way, when anyone has developed & pursued mindfulness immersed in the body, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

TEN BENEFITS

"Monks, for one in whom mindfulness immersed in the body is cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken, ten benefits can be expected. Which ten?

"[1] He conquers displeasure & delight, and displeasure does not conquer him. He remains victorious over any displeasure that has arisen.

"[2] He conquers fear & dread, and fear & dread to not conquer him. He remains victorious over any fear & dread that have arisen.

"[3] He is resistant to cold, heat, hunger, thirst, the touch of gadflies & mosquitoes, wind & sun & creeping things; to abusive, hurtful language; he is the sort that can endure bodily feelings that, when they arise, are painful, sharp, stabbing, fierce, distasteful, disagreeable, deadly.

"[4] He can attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four jhanas—heightened mental states providing a pleasant abiding in the here & now.

"[5] He wields manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. He dives in & out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting crosslegged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches & strokes even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds.

"[6] He hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far.

"[7] He knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as a mind with passion, and a mind without passion as a mind without passion. He discerns a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion, and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion. He discerns a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion, and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion. He discerns a restricted mind as a restricted mind, and a scattered mind as a scattered mind. He discerns an enlarged mind as an enlarged mind, and an unenlarged mind as an unenlarged mind. He discerns an excelled mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as an excelled mind, and an unexcelled mind as an unexcelled mind. He discerns a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind, and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind. He discerns a released mind as a released mind, and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind.

"[8] He recollects his manifold past lives (lit: previous homes), i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction & expansion, [recollecting], 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus he remembers his manifold past lives in their modes & details.

"[9] He sees—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.' Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away & re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

"[10] Through the ending of the mental fermentations, he remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known and made them manifest for himself right in the here & now.

"Monks, for one in whom mindfulness immersed in the body is cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken, these ten benefits can be expected."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

—*MN 119*

MINDFULNESS OF IN-&-OUT BREATHING

"Now how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to bring the four frames of reference to their culmination?

"There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore.[1] Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"[1] Breathing in long, he discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, he discerns that he is breathing out long. [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, he discerns that he is breathing out short. [3] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the entire body,[2] and to breathe out sensitive to the entire body. [4] He trains himself to breathe in calming bodily fabrication,[3] and to breathe out calming the bodily fabrication.

"[5] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to rapture, and to breathe out sensitive to rapture. [6] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to pleasure, and to breathe out sensitive to pleasure. [7] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication,[4] and to breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication. [8] He trains himself to breathe in calming mental fabrication, and to breathe out calming mental fabrication.

"[9] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the mind, and to breathe out sensitive to the mind. [10] He trains himself to breathe in satisfying the mind, and to breathe out satisfying the mind. [11] He trains himself to breathe in steadying the mind, and to breathe out steadying the mind. [12] He trains himself to breathe in releasing the mind, and to breathe out releasing the mind.[5]

"[13] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on inconstancy, and to breathe out focusing on inconstancy. [14] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on dispassion *[literally,* fading], and to breathe out focusing on dispassion. [15] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on cessation, and to breathe out focusing on cessation. [16] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on relinquishment, and to breathe out focusing on relinquishment.

THE FOUR FRAMES OF REFERENCE

"[1] Now, on whatever occasion a monk breathing in long discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, discerns that he is breathing out long; or breathing in short, discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, discerns that he is breathing out short; trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to the entire body; trains himself to breathe in...&...out calming bodily fabrication: On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *body* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this—the in-&-out breath—is classed as a body among bodies, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"[2] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to rapture; trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to pleasure; trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to mental fabrication; trains himself to breathe in...&...out calming mental fabrication: On that occasion the monk remains focused on *feelings* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this—close attention to in-&-out breaths—is classed as a feeling among feelings,[6] which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—

ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"[3] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to the mind; trains himself to breathe in...&...out satisfying the mind; trains himself to breathe in...&...out steadying the mind; trains himself to breathe in...&...out releasing the mind: On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *mind* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I don't say that there is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing in one of confused mindfulness and no alertness, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"[4] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself to breathe in...&...out focusing on inconstancy; trains himself to breathe in...&...out focusing on dispassion; trains himself to breathe in...&...out focusing on cessation; trains himself to breathe in...&...out focusing on relinquishment: On that occasion the monk remains focused on *mental qualities* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He who sees clearly with discernment the abandoning of greed & distress is one who oversees with equanimity, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

"This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to bring the four frames of reference to their culmination.

NOTES

1. To the fore *(parimukhaṁ):* The Abhidhamma takes an etymological approach to this term, defining it as around *(pari-)* the mouth *(mukhaṁ)*. In the Vinaya, however, it is used in a context (Cv.V.27.4) where it undoubtedly means

the front of the chest. There is also the possibility that the term could be used idiomatically as "to the front," which is how I have translated it here.

2. The commentaries insist that "body" here means the breath, but this is unlikely in this context, for the next step—without further explanation—refers to the breath as "bodily fabrication." If the Buddha were using two different terms to refer to the breath in such close proximity, he would have been careful to signal that he was redefining his terms (as he does below, when explaining that the first four steps in breath meditation correspond to the practice of focusing on the body in and of itself as a frame of reference). The step of breathing in and out sensitive to the entire body relates to the many similes in the suttas depicting jhana as a state of whole-body awareness (see MN 119).

3. "In-&-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That's why in-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications."—MN 44.

4. "Perceptions & feelings are mental; these are things tied up with the mind. That's why perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications."—MN 44.

5. AN IX.34 shows how the mind, step by step, is temporarily released from burdensome mental states of greater and greater refinement as it advances through the stages of jhana.

6. As this shows, a meditator focusing on feelings in themselves as a frame of reference should not abandon the breath as the basis for his/her concentration.

—MN 118

III. The Advantages of Mindfulness Immersed in the Body

Khitaka:

How light my body!
Touched by abundant
rapture & bliss,
—like a cotton tuft
borne on the breeze—
it seems to be floating
—my body!

—Thag I.104

Ananda: "Lord, does the Blessed One have direct experience of going to the Brahma world by means of supranormal power with a mind-made body?"

The Buddha: "Yes, Ananda...."

Ananda: "But does the Blessed One also have direct experience of going to the Brahma world by means of supranormal power with this very physical body, composed of the four great elements?"

The Buddha: "Yes...."

Ananda: "It's awesome, lord, and amazing that the Blessed One should have direct experience of going to the Brahma world by means of supranormal power with a mind-made body, and of going to the Brahma world by means of supranormal power with this very physical body, composed of the four great elements."

The Buddha: "Tathagatas are both awesome, Ananda, and endowed with awesome qualities. They are both amazing and endowed with amazing qualities. Whenever the Tathagata merges his body with his mind and his mind with his body, and remains having alighted on the perception of ease and buoyancy with regard to the body, then his body becomes lighter, more pliant, more malleable, & more radiant.

"Just as when an iron ball heated all day becomes lighter, more pliant, more malleable, & more radiant; in the same way, whenever the Tathagata merges his body with his mind and his mind with his body, and remains having alighted on the perception of ease and buoyancy with regard to the body, then his body becomes lighter, more pliant, more malleable, & more radiant.

"Now, whenever the Tathagata merges his body with his mind and his mind with his body, and remains having alighted on the perception of ease and buoyancy with regard to the body, then his body rises effortlessly from the earth up into the sky. He then experiences manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. He dives in & out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting crosslegged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches & strokes even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds.

"Just as a tuft of cotton seed or a ball of thistle down, lightly wafted by the wind, rises effortlessly from the earth up into the sky, in the same way, whenever the Tathagata concentrates his body in his mind & his mind in his body, and remains having alighted on the perception of ease and buoyancy, then his body rises effortlessly from the earth up into the sky. He then experiences manifold supranormal powers...even as far as the Brahma worlds."

—SN LI.22

Simply talking a lot
doesn't maintain the Dhamma.
Whoever
—although he's heard next to nothing—
sees Dhamma through his body,
is not heedless of Dhamma:
he's one who maintains the Dhamma.

—Dhp 259

They awaken, always wide awake:
Gotama's disciples
whose mindfulness, both day & night,
is constantly immersed
in the body.

—Dhp 299

"Once a hawk suddenly swooped down on a quail and seized it. Then the quail, as it was being carried off by the hawk, lamented, 'O, just my bad luck and lack of merit that I was wandering out of my proper range and into the territory of others! If only I had kept to my proper range today, to my own ancestral territory, this hawk would have been no match for me in battle.'

"'But what is your proper range?' the hawk asked. 'What is your own ancestral territory?'

"'A newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up.'

"So the hawk, without bragging about its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, let go of the quail. 'Go, quail, but even when you have gone there you won't escape me.'

"Then the quail, having gone to a newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up and climbing up on top of a large clump of earth, stood taunting the hawk, 'Now come and get me, you hawk! Now come and get me, you hawk!'

"So the hawk, without bragging about its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, folded its two wings and suddenly swooped down toward the quail. When the quail knew, 'The hawk is coming at me full speed,' it slipped behind the clump of earth, and right there the hawk shattered its breast.

"This is what happens to anyone who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others.

"For this reason, you should not wander into what is not your proper range and is the territory of others. In one who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others, Mara gains an opening, Mara gains a foothold. And what, for a monk, is not his proper range and is the territory of others? The five strands of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Sounds cognizable by the ear...Smells cognizable by the nose...Tastes cognizable by the tongue...Tactile sensations cognizable by the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. These, for a monk, are not his proper range and are the territory of others.

"Wander, monks, in what is your proper range, your own ancestral territory. In one who wanders in what is his proper range, his own ancestral territory, Mara gains no opening, Mara gains no foothold. And what, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory? The four frames of reference. Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves ... mind in & of itself ... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory."

—SN XLVII.6

"There are in the Himalayas, the king of mountains, difficult, uneven areas where neither monkeys nor human beings wander. There are difficult, uneven areas where monkeys wander, but not human beings. There are level stretches of land, delightful, where both monkeys and human beings wander. In such spots hunters set a tar trap in the monkeys' tracks, in order to catch some monkeys. Those monkeys who are not foolish or careless by nature, when they see the tar trap, will keep their distance. But any monkey who is foolish & careless by nature comes up to the tar trap and grabs it with its paw, which then gets stuck there. Thinking, 'I'll free my paw,' he grabs it with his other paw. That too gets stuck. Thinking, 'I'll free both of my paws,' he grabs it with his foot. That too gets stuck. Thinking, 'I'll free both of my paws and my foot,' he grabs it with his other foot. That too gets stuck. Thinking, 'I'll free both of my paws and my feet as well,' he grabs it with his mouth. That too gets stuck. So the monkey, snared in five ways, lies there whimpering, having fallen on misfortune, fallen on ruin, a prey to whatever the hunter wants to do with him. Then the hunter, without releasing the monkey, skewers him right there, picks him up, and goes off as he likes.

"This is what happens to anyone who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others. For this reason, you should not wander into what is not your proper range and is the territory of others...."

—SN XLVII.7

"There is the case where a monk, seeing a form with the eye, is obsessed with pleasing forms, is repelled by unpleasing forms, and remains with body-mindfulness unestablished, with limited awareness. He does not discern, as it actually is present, the release of awareness, the release of discernment where any evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder. (Similarly with ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.)

"Just as if a person, catching six animals of different ranges, of different habitats, were to bind them with a strong rope. Catching a snake, he would bind it with a strong rope. Catching a crocodile...a bird...a dog...a hyena... a monkey, he would bind it with a strong rope. Binding them all with a strong rope, and tying a knot in the middle, he would set chase to them.

"Then those six animals, of different ranges, of different habitats, would each pull toward its own range & habitat. The snake would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the anthill.' The crocodile would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the water.' The bird would pull, thinking, 'I'll fly up into the air.' The dog would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the village.' The hyena would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the charnel ground.' The monkey would pull, thinking, 'I'll go into the forest.' And when these six animals became internally exhausted, they would submit, they would surrender, they would come under the sway of whichever among them was the strongest. In the same way, when a monk whose mindfulness immersed in the body is undeveloped & unpursued, the eye pulls toward pleasing forms, while unpleasing forms are repellent. The ear pulls toward pleasing sounds...the nose pulls toward pleasing smells...the tongue pulls toward pleasing tastes...the body pulls toward pleasing tactile sensations...the intellect pulls toward pleasing ideas, while unpleasing ideas are repellent. This, monks, is lack of restraint.

"And what is restraint? There is the case where a monk, seeing a form with the eye, is not obsessed with pleasing forms, is not repelled by unpleasing forms, and remains with body-mindfulness established, with immeasurable awareness. He discerns, as it actually is present, the release of awareness, the release of discernment where all evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder. (Similarly with ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.)

"Just as if a person, catching six animals of different ranges, of different habitats, were to bind them with a strong rope...and tether them to a strong post or stake. Then those six animals, of different ranges, of different habitats, would each pull toward its own range & habitat....And when these six animals became internally exhausted, they would stand, sit, or lie down right there next to the post or stake. In the same way, when a monk whose mindfulness immersed in the body is developed & pursued, the eye does not pull toward pleasing forms, and unpleasing forms are not repellent. The ear does not pull toward pleasing sounds...the nose does not pull toward pleasing smells...the tongue does not pull toward pleasing tastes...the body does not pull toward pleasing tactile sensations...the intellect does not pull toward pleasing ideas, and unpleasing ideas are not repellent. This, monks, is restraint.

"The 'strong post or stake' is a term for mindfulness immersed in the body.

Thus you should train yourselves: 'We will develop mindfulness immersed in the body. We will pursue it, give it a means of transport, give it a grounding. We will steady it, consolidate it, and set about it properly.' That's how you should train yourselves."

—SN XXXV.206

"Suppose, monks, that a large crowd of people comes thronging together, saying, 'The beauty queen! The beauty queen!' And suppose that the beauty queen is highly accomplished at singing & dancing, so that an even greater crowd comes thronging, saying, 'The beauty queen is singing! The beauty queen is dancing!' Then a man comes along, desiring life & shrinking from death, desiring pleasure & abhorring pain. They say to him, 'Now look here, mister. You must take this bowl filled to the brim with oil and carry it on your head in between the great crowd & the beauty queen. A man with a raised sword will follow right behind you, and wherever you spill even a drop of oil, right there will he cut off your head.' Now what do you think, monks: Will that man, not paying attention to the bowl of oil, let himself get distracted outside?"

"No, lord."

"I have given you this parable to convey a meaning. The meaning is this: The bowl filled to the brim with oil stands for mindfulness immersed in the body. Thus you should train yourselves: 'We will develop mindfulness immersed in the body. We will pursue it, give it a means of transport, give it a grounding. We will steady it, consolidate it, and set about it properly.' That's how you should train yourselves."

—SN XLVII.20

With mindfulness immersed in the body
well established,
restrained with respect to the six
media of contact,
always concentrated, the monk
can know Unbinding for himself.

—Ud.III.5

Knowing this body
is like foam,
realizing its nature
—a mirage—
cutting out
the blossoms of Mara,
you go where the King of Death
can't see.

—*Dhp 46*

"Whoever pervades the great ocean with his awareness encompasses whatever rivulets flow down into the ocean. In the same way, whoever develops & pursues mindfulness immersed in the body encompasses whatever skillful qualities are on the side of clear knowing."

"When one thing is practiced & pursued, the body is calmed, the mind is calmed, thinking & evaluating are stilled, and all qualities on the side of clear knowing go to the culmination of their development. Which one thing? Mindfulness immersed in the body."

"When one thing is practiced & pursued, ignorance is abandoned, clear knowing arises, the conceit 'I am' is abandoned, latent tendencies are uprooted, fetters are abandoned. Which one thing? Mindfulness immersed in the body."

"Those who do not taste mindfulness of the body do not taste the Deathless. Those who taste mindfulness of the body taste the Deathless."

"Those who are heedless of mindfulness of the body are heedless of the Deathless."

"Those who comprehend mindfulness of the body comprehend the Deathless."

—*AN I.225, 227, 230, 235, 239, 245*

IV. The Disadvantages of Attachment to the Body

All too soon, this body
will lie on the ground
cast off,
bereft of consciousness,
like a useless scrap
of wood.

—*Dhp 41*

"The body is aflame. Tactile sensations are aflame. Bodily consciousness is aflame. Bodily contact is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on bodily contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs….

"Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the body, disenchanted with tactile sensations, disenchanted with bodily consciousness, disenchanted with bodily contact. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on bodily contact, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: With that, too, he grows disenchanted.

"Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, 'Fully released.' He discerns that 'Birth is depleted, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

—*SN XXXV.28*

Then Janussonin the brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "I am of the view & opinion that there is no one who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death."

[The Blessed One said:] "Brahman, there are those who, subject to death, are afraid & in terror of death. And there are those who, subject to death, are not afraid or in terror of death.

"And who is the person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death? There is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, & craving for sensuality. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, 'O, those beloved sensual pleasures will be taken from me, and I will be taken from them!' He grieves & is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, & grows delirious. This is a person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death.

"Then there is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, & craving for the body. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, 'O, my beloved body will be taken from me, and I will be taken from my body!' He grieves & is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, & grows delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death.

"Then there is the case of the person who has not done what is good, has not done what is skillful, has not given protection to those in fear, and instead has done what is evil, savage, & cruel. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, 'I have not done what is good, have not done what is skillful, have not given protection to those in fear, and instead have done what is evil, savage, & cruel. To the extent that there is a destination for those who have not done what is good, have not done what is skillful, have not given protection to those in fear, and instead have done what is evil, savage, & cruel, that's where I'm headed after death.' He grieves & is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, & grows delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death.

"Then there is the case of the person in doubt & perplexity, who has not arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, 'How doubtful & perplexed I am! I have not arrived at any certainty with regard to the True Dhamma!' He grieves & is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, & grows delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death.

"These, brahman, are four people who, subject to death, are afraid & in terror of death.

"And who is the person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death?

"There is the case of the person who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, & craving for sensuality. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought doesn't occur to him, 'O, those beloved sensual pleasures will be taken from me, and I will be taken from them!' He doesn't grieve, isn't tormented; doesn't weep, beat his breast, or grow delirious. This is a person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.

"Then there is the case of the person who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, & craving for the body. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought doesn't occur to him, 'O, my beloved body will be taken from me, and I will be taken from my body!' He doesn't grieve, isn't tormented; doesn't weep, beat his breast, or grow delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.

"Then there is the case of the person who has done what is good, has done what is skillful, has given protection to those in fear, and has not done what is evil, savage, or cruel. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, 'I have done what is good, have done what is skillful, have given protection to those in fear, and I have not done what is evil, savage, or cruel. To the extent that there is a destination for those who have done what is good, what is skillful, have given protection to those in fear, and have not done what is evil, savage, or cruel, that's where I'm headed after death.' He doesn't grieve, isn't tormented; doesn't weep, beat his breast, or grow delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.

"Then there is the case of the person who has no doubt or perplexity, who has arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, 'I have no doubt or perplexity. I have arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma.' He doesn't grieve, isn't tormented; doesn't weep, beat his breast, or grow delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.

"These, brahman, are four people who, subject to death, are not afraid or in terror of death."

[When this was said, Janussonin the brahman said to the Blessed One:] "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life."

—AN IV.184

"And what is the perception of drawbacks? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—reflects thus: 'This body has many pains, many drawbacks. In this body many kinds of disease arise, such as: seeing-diseases, hearing-diseases, nose-diseases, tongue-diseases, body-diseases, head-diseases, ear-diseases, mouth-diseases, teeth-diseases, cough, asthma, catarrh, fever, aging, stomach-ache, fainting, dysentery, grippe, cholera, leprosy, boils, ringworm, tuberculosis, epilepsy, skin-diseases, itch, scab, psoriasis, scabies, jaundice, diabetes, hemorrhoids, fistulas, ulcers; diseases arising from bile, from phlegm, from the wind-property, from combinations of bodily humors, from changes in the weather, from uneven care of the body, from attacks, from the result of kamma; cold, heat, hunger, thirst, defecation, urination.' Thus he remains focused on drawbacks with regard to this body. This is called the perception of drawbacks."

—AN X.60

"I will teach you a Dhamma discourse on bondage & lack of bondage. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"Yes, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said: "A woman attends inwardly to her feminine faculties, her feminine gestures, her feminine manners, feminine poise, feminine desires, feminine voice, feminine charms. She is excited by that, delighted by that. Being excited & delighted by that, she attends outwardly to masculine faculties, masculine gestures, masculine manners, masculine poise, masculine desires, masculine voices, masculine charms. She is excited by that, delighted by that. Being excited & delighted by that, she wants to be bonded to what is outside her, wants whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Delighting, caught up in her femininity, a woman goes into bondage with reference to men. This is how a woman does not transcend her femininity.

"A man attends inwardly to his masculine faculties, masculine gestures, masculine manners, masculine poise, masculine desires, masculine voice, masculine charms. He is excited by that, delighted by that. Being excited & delighted by that, he attends outwardly to feminine faculties, feminine gestures, feminine manners, feminine poise, feminine desires, feminine voices, feminine charms. He is excited by that, delighted by that. Being excited & delighted by that, he wants to be bonded to what is outside him, wants whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Delighting, caught up in his masculinity, a man goes into bondage with reference to women. This is how a man does not transcend his masculinity.

"And how is there lack of bondage? A woman does not attend inwardly to her feminine faculties ... feminine charms. She is not excited by that, not delighted by that ... does not attend outwardly to masculine faculties ... masculine charms. She is not excited by that, not delighted by that ... does not want to be bonded to what is outside her, does not want whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Not delighting, not caught up in her femininity, a woman does not go into bondage with reference to men. This is how a woman transcends her femininity.

"A man does not attend inwardly to his masculine faculties ... masculine charms. He is not excited by that, not delighted by that ... does not attend outwardly to feminine faculties ... feminine charms. He is not excited by that, not delighted by that ... does not want to be bonded to what is outside him, does not want whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Not delighting, not caught up in his masculinity, a man does not go into bondage with reference to women. This is how a man transcends his masculinity.

"This is how there is lack of bondage. And this is the Dhamma discourse on bondage & lack of bondage."

—AN VII.48

[Ven. Ananda teaches a nun:] "'This body comes into being through food. And yet it is by relying on food that food is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk, considering it thoughtfully, takes food—not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification—but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, [thinking,] 'Thus will I destroy old feelings [of hunger] and not create new feelings [from overeating]. I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.' Then, at a later time, he abandons food, having relied on food. 'This body, sister, comes into being through food. And yet it is by relying on food that food is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.

"'This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation- & discernment-release, having known & realized them for himself in the here & now.' The thought occurs to him, 'I hope that I, too, will—through the ending of the fermentations—enter & remain in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here & now.' Then, at a later time, he abandons craving, having relied on craving. 'This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said.

"'This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.' The thought occurs to him, 'The monk named such-&-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now. Then why not me?' Then, at a later time, he abandons conceit, having relied on conceit. 'This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.

"This body comes into being through sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is to be abandoned. With regard to sexual intercourse, the Buddha declares the cutting off of the bridge."

—AN IV.159

Look at the beautified image,
a heap of festering wounds, shored up:
ill, but the object
of many resolves,
where there is nothing
lasting or sure.

Worn out is this body,
a nest of diseases, dissolving.
This putrid conglomeration
is bound to break up,
for life is hemmed in with death.

On seeing these bones
discarded
like gourds in the fall,
pigeon-gray:
what delight?

A city made of bones,
plastered over with flesh & blood,
whose hidden treasures are:
pride & contempt,
aging & death.

—Dhp 147-150

Whether walking, standing,
sitting, or lying down,
it flexes & stretches:
        this is the body's movement.
Joined together with tendons & bones,
plastered over with muscle & skin,
hidden by complexion,
        the body isn't seen
        for what it is:
filled with intestines, filled with stomach,
with the lump of the liver,
bladder, lungs, heart,
kidneys, spleen,
mucus, sweat, saliva, fat,
blood, synovial fluid, bile, & oil.
On top of that,
in nine streams,
filth is always flowing from it:
from the eyes : eye secretions,
from the ears : ear secretions,
from the nose : mucus,
from the mouth : now vomit,
        now phlegm,
        now bile.
from the body : beads of sweat.
And on top of that,
its hollow head is filled with brains.

The fool, beset by ignorance,
thinks it beautiful,
but when it lies dead—
                swollen, livid,
        cast away in a charnel ground—
even relatives don't care for it.
Dogs feed on it,
jackals, wolves, & worms.

Crows & vultures feed on it,
along with any other animals there.

Having heard the Awakened One's words,
the discerning monk
comprehends, for he sees it
    for what it is:
"As this is, so is that.
As that, so this."
Within & without,
he should let desire for the body
    fade away.
With desire & passion faded away,
the discerning monk arrives here:
    at the deathless,
    the calm,
    the undying state
    of Unbinding.

This two-footed, filthy, evil-smelling,
filled-with-various-carcasses,
oozing-out-here-&-there body:
Whoever would think,
on the basis of a body like this,
to exalt himself or disparage another:
    What is that
    if not blindness?

—Sn I.11

"Monks, it's just as if there were a boil that had been building for many years with nine openings, nine un-lanced heads. Whatever would ooze out from it would be an uncleanliness oozing out, a stench oozing out, a disgust oozing out. Whatever would be discharged from it would be an uncleanliness discharging, a stench discharging, a disgust discharging.

"'A boil,' monks, is another word for this body composed of the four properties, born of mother & father, fed on rice & porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing & massaging, breaking-up & disintegrating. It has nine openings, nine un-lanced heads. Whatever would ooze out from it would be an uncleanliness oozing out, a stench oozing out, a disgust oozing out. Whatever would be discharged from it would be an uncleanliness discharging, a stench discharging, a disgust discharging. For that reason, you should become disenchanted with this body."

—AN IX.15

Pingiya:

I'm old & weak,
my complexion dull.
I've blurry eyes
and trouble hearing,
but may I not perish deluded,
confused!
Teach me the Dhamma
so that I may know
the abandoning here
of birth & aging.

The Buddha:

Seeing people suffering
on account of their bodies—
heedless people are oppressed
on account of their bodies—
then heedful, Pingiya,
let go of the body
for the sake of no further becoming.

Pingiya:

In the four cardinal directions,
the four intermediate,
above & below
    —the ten directions—
there is nothing in the world
    unseen, unheard,
    unsensed, uncognized by you.
Teach me the Dhamma
so that I may know
the abandoning here
    of birth & aging.

The Buddha:

Seeing people,
    victims of craving—
    aflame, overwhelmed with aging—
then heedful, Pingiya,
let go of craving
    for the sake of no further becoming.

—Sn V.16

Manava:

On seeing an old person;
    &
a person in pain, diseased;
    &
a person dead, gone to life's end,
    I left
for the life gone forth,
    abandoning the sensuality
    that entices the heart.

—Thag I.73

All too soon, this body
will lie on the ground
cast off,
bereft of consciousness,
like a useless scrap
of wood.

—Dhp 41

Look at the beautified image,
a heap of festering wounds, shored up:
ill, but the object
of many desires,
where there is nothing
lasting or sure.

—Dhp 147

A city made of bones,
plastered over with flesh & blood,
whose hidden treasures are:
pride & contempt,
aging & death.

—Dhp 150

This unlistening man
matures like an ox.
His muscles develop,
his discernment not.

—Dhp 152

Kimbila:

As if sent by a curse,
it drops on us—
aging.

The body seems   other,
though it's still the same one.
I'm still here
& have never been absent from it,
but I remember myself
as if somebody else's.

—Thag I.118

Mahakala:

This swarthy woman
[preparing a corpse for cremation]
—crow-like, enormous—
breaking a thigh & then the other
thigh,
breaking an arm & then the other
arm,
cracking open the head,
like a pot of curds,
she sits with them heaped up beside her.

Whoever, unknowing,
makes acquisitions
—the fool—
returns over & over
to suffering & stress.
So, discerning,
don't make acquisitions.
May I never lie
with my head cracked open
again.

—Thag II.16

Rajadata:

I, a monk,
gone to the charnel ground,

saw a woman cast away,
discarded
there in the cemetery.

Though some were disgusted,
seeing her—dead, evil—
lust
appeared,
as if I were blind
to the oozings.

In less time than it takes
for rice to cook,
I got out of that place.
Mindful, alert, I
sat down to one side.
Then apt attention arose in me,
the drawbacks appeared,
disenchantment stood
at an even keel:

With that, my heart was released.
See the Dhamma's true rightness!
The three knowledges
have been attained;
the Awakened One's bidding,
done.

—Thag V.1

As Subha the nun was going through Jivaka's delightful mango grove, a libertine (a goldsmith's son) blocked her path, so she said to him:

'What wrong have I done you
that you stand in my way?
It's not proper, my friend,

that a man should touch
a woman gone forth.
I respect the Master's message,
the training pointed out by the one well-gone.
I am pure, without blemish:
        Why do you stand in my way?
You—your mind agitated, impassioned;
I—unagitated, unimpassioned,
with a mind entirely freed:
        Why do you stand in my way?'

'You are young & not bad-looking,
what need do you have for going forth?
Throw off your ochre robe—
        Come, let's delight in the flowering grove.
A sweetness they exude everywhere,
the towering trees with their pollen.
The beginning of spring is a pleasant season—
        Come, let's delight in the flowering grove.
The trees with their blossoming tips
moan, as it were, in the breeze:
What delight will you have
if you plunge into the grove alone?
Frequented by herds of wild beasts,
disturbed by elephants rutting & aroused:
you want to go
        unaccompanied
into the great, lonely, frightening grove?

Like a doll made of gold, you will go about,
like a goddess in the gardens of heaven.
With delicate, smooth Kasi fabrics,
you will shine, O beauty without compare.
I would gladly do your every bidding
if we were to dwell in the glade.

For there is no creature dearer to me
than you, O nymph with the languid regard.
If you do as I ask, happy, come live in my house.
Dwelling in the calm of a palace,
have women wait on you,
wear delicate Kasi fabrics,
adorn yourself with garlands & creams.
I will make you many & varied ornaments
of gold, jewels, & pearls.
Climb onto a costly bed,
scented with sandalwood carvings,
with a well-washed coverlet, beautiful,
spread with a woolen quilt, brand new.

Like a blue lotus rising from the water
where no human beings dwell,
you will go to old age with your limbs unseen,
if you stay as you are in the holy life.'

'What do you assume of any essence,
here in this cemetery grower, filled with corpses,
this body destined to break up?
What do you see when you look at me,
you who are out of your mind?'

'Your eyes
are like those of a fawn,
like those of a sprite in the mountains.
Seeing your eyes, my sensual delight
grows all the more.
Like tips they are, of blue lotuses,
in your golden face
—spotless:
Seeing your eyes, my sensual delight
grows all the more.
Even if you should go far away,

I will think only of your pure,
long-lashed gaze,
for there is nothing dearer to me
than your eyes, O nymph with the languid regard.'

'You want to stray from the road,
you want the moon as a plaything,
you want to jump over Mount Sineru,
you who have designs on one born of the Buddha.
For there is nothing anywhere at all
in the cosmos with its gods,
that would be an object of passion for me.
I don't even know what that passion would be,
for it's been killed, root & all, by the path.
Like embers from a pit—scattered,
like a bowl of poison—evaporated,
I don't even see what that passion would be,
for it's been killed, root & all, by the path.
Try to seduce one who hasn't reflected on this,
or who has not followed the Master's teaching.
But try it with this one who knows
and you suffer.
For in the midst of praise & blame,
pleasure & pain,
my mindfulness stands firm.
Knowing the unattractiveness
of things compounded,
my mind cleaves to nothing at all.
I am a follower of the one well-gone,
riding the vehicle of the eightfold way:
My arrow removed, fermentation-free,
I delight, having gone to an empty dwelling.
For I have seen well-painted puppets,
hitched up with sticks & strings,
made to dance in various ways.

When the sticks & strings are removed,
thrown away, scattered, shredded,
smashed into pieces, not to be found,
in what will the mind there make its home?
This body of mine, which is just like that,
when devoid of dhammas doesn't function.
When, devoid of dhammas, it doesn't function,
in what will the mind there make its home?

Like a mural you've seen, painted on a wall,
smeared with yellow orpiment,
there your vision has been distorted,
meaningless your human perception.
Like an evaporated mirage,
like a tree of gold in a dream,
like a magic show in the midst of a crowd—
you run blind after what is unreal.
Resembling a ball of sealing wax,
set in a hollow,
with a bubble in the middle
and bathed with tears,
eye secretions are born there too:
The parts of the eye
are rolled all together
in various ways.'

Plucking out her lovely eye,
with mind unattached
she felt no regret.

'Here, take this eye. It's yours.'

Straightaway she gave it to him.
Straightaway his passion faded right there,
and he begged her forgiveness.

'Be well, follower of the holy life.
This sort of thing
won't happen again.
Harming a person like you
is like embracing a blazing fire.
It's as if I have seized a poisonous snake.
So may you be well. Forgive me.'

And released from there, the nun
went to the excellent Buddha's presence.
When she saw the mark of his excellent merit,
her eye became
as it was before.

—Thig XIV

Ornamented, finely clothed
garlanded, adorned,
her feet stained red with lac,
she wore slippers:
a courtesan.
Stepping out of her slippers—
her hands raised before me,
palm-to-palm over her heart—
she softly, tenderly,
in measured words
spoke to me first:
"You are young, recluse.
Heed my message:
Partake of human sensuality.
I will give you luxury.
Truly I vow to you,
I will tend to you as to a fire.
When we are old,
both leaning on canes,

then we will both become contemplatives,
winning the benefits of both worlds."

And seeing her before me—
a courtesan, ornamented, finely clothed,
hands palm-to-palm over her heart—
like a snare of death laid out,
apt attention arose in me,
the drawbacks appeared,
disenchantment stood
at an even keel:

With that, my heart was released.
See the Dhamma's true rightness!
The three knowledges
have been attained;
the Buddha's bidding,
done.

—Thag VII.1

Kappa:

Full of the many clans of impurities,
the great manufacturer of excrement,
like a stagnant pool,
a great tumor,
great wound,
full of blood & lymph,
immersed in a cesspool,
trickling liquids, the body
is oozing foulness—always.
Bound together with sixty sinews,
plastered with a stucco of muscle,
wrapped in a jacket of skin,
this foul body is of no worth at all.
Linked together with a chain of bones,
stitched together with tendon-threads,

it produces its various postures,
from being hitched up together.

Headed surely to death,
in the presence of the King of Mortality,
the man who learns to discard it right here,
goes wherever he wants.

Covered with ignorance,
the body's tied down with a four-fold tie,[1]
sunk in the floods,[2]
caught in the net of obsessions,[3]
conjoined with five hindrances,[4]
given over to thought,
accompanied with the root of craving,
roofed with delusion's roofing.
That's how the body functions,
compelled by the compulsion of kamma,
but its attainment ends
in ruin.
Its many becomings go
to ruin.

These who hold to this body as *mine*
—blind fools, people run-of-the-mill—
fill the horrific cemetery,
taking on further becoming.
Those who stay uninvolved with this body
—as they would with a serpent
smeared with dung—
disgorging the root of becoming,[5]
from lack of fermentation
will be totally Unbound.

NOTES

1. The four-fold tie: greed, ill will, attachment to precepts & practice, and dogmatic obsession with views.

2. Floods: sensuality, becoming, views, and ignorance. See SN XLV.171. These are identical with the four yokes. See AN IV.10.

3. Obsessions: sensual psssion, resistance, views, uncertainty, conceit, passion for becoming, and ignorance. See AN VII.11-12.

4. Hindrances: sensual desire, ill will, sloth & torpor, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty. See DN 2 and SN XLVI.51.

5. The root of becoming: craving.

—*Thag X.5*

Ampabali:

Black was my hair
—the color of bees—
& curled at the tips;
with age, it looked like coarse hemp.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Fragrant, like a perfumed basket
filled with flowers: my coiffure.
With age it smelled musty,
like animal fur.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Thick & lush, like a well-tended grove,
made splendid, the tips elaborate
with comb & pin.
With age, it grew thin
& bald here & there.

The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Adorned with gold & delicate pins,
it was splendid, ornamented with braids.
Now, with age,
that head has gone bald.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Curved, as if well-drawn by an artist,
my brows were once splendid.
With age, they droop down in folds.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Radiant, brilliant like jewels,
my eyes: elongated, black—deep black.
With age, they're no longer splendid.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Like a delicate peak, my nose
was splendid in the prime of my youth.
With age, it's like a long pepper.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Like bracelets—well-fashioned, well-finished—
my ears were once splendid.
With age, they droop down in folds.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Like plaintain buds in their color,
my teeth were once splendid.
With age, they're broken & yellowed.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Like that of a cuckoo in the dense jungle,
flitting through deep forest thickets:
sweet was the tone of my voice.
With age, it cracks here & there.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Smooth—like a conch shell well-polished—
my neck was once splendid.
With age, it's broken down, bent.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Like rounded door-bars—both of them—
my arms were once splendid.
With age, they're like dried up patali trees.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Adorned with gold & delicate rings,
my hands were once splendid.
With age, they're like onions & tubers.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Swelling, round, firm, & high,
both my breasts were once splendid.
In the drought of old age, they dangle
like empty old water bags.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Like a sheet of gold, well-burnished,
my body was splendid.
Now it's covered with very fine wrinkles.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Smooth in their lines, like an elephant's trunk,
both my thighs were once splendid.
With age, they're like knotted bamboo.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Adorned with gold & delicate anklets,
my calves were once splendid.
With age, they're like sesame sticks.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

As if they were stuffed with soft cotton,
both my feet were once splendid.
With age, they're shriveled & cracked.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words
doesn't change.

Such was this physical heap,
now: decrepit, the home of pains, many pains.
A house with its plaster all fallen off.
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words

doesn't change.

—Thig XIII.1

Nanda:

"Sick, putrid, unclean:
look, Nanda, at this physical heap.
Through contemplation of the foul,
develop your mind,
make it one, well-centered.

As this [your body], so that.
As that, so this.
It gives off a foul stench,
the delight of fools."

Considering it thus,
untiring, both day & night,
I, with my own discernment
        dissecting it,
                saw.

And as I, heedful,
        examined it aptly,
this body—as it actually is—
was seen inside & out.

Then was I disenchanted with the body
        & dispassionate within:
Heedful, detached,
        calmed was I.
                Unbound.

—*Thig V.4*

Sona:

Ten children I bore
from this physical heap.
Then weak from that, aged,
I went to a nun.
She taught me the Dhamma:
        aggregates, sense spheres, & elements.
Hearing her Dhamma,
I cut off my hair & ordained.
Having purified the divine eye
while still a probationer,
I know my previous lives,
where I lived in the past.
I develop the theme-less meditation,
well-focused oneness.

I gain the liberation of immediacy—
from lack of clinging, unbound.

The five aggregates, comprehended,
stand like a tree with its root cut through.
I spit on old age.
There is now no further becoming.
—*Thig V.8*

V. Samatha / Vipassana

"These two qualities have a share in clear knowing. Which two? Tranquility *(samatha)* & insight *(vipassana)*.

"When tranquility is developed, what purpose does it serve? The mind is developed. And when the mind is developed, what purpose does it serve? Passion is abandoned.

"When insight is developed, what purpose does it serve? Discernment is developed. And when discernment is developed, what purpose does it serve? Ignorance is abandoned."

—AN II.29

"Suppose that there were a royal frontier fortress with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and six gates. In it would be a wise, competent, knowledgeable gatekeeper to keep out those he didn't know and to let in those he did. A swift pair of messengers, coming from the east, would say to the gatekeeper, 'Where, my good man, is the commander of this fortress?' He would say, 'There he is, sirs, sitting in the central square.' The swift pair of messengers, delivering their accurate report to the commander of the fortress, would then go back by the route by which they had come. Then a swift pair of messengers, coming from the west ... the north ... the south, would say to the gatekeeper, 'Where, my good man, is the commander of this fortress?' He would say, 'There he is, sirs, sitting in the central square.' The swift pair of messengers, delivering their accurate report to the commander of the fortress, would then go back by the route by which they had come.

"I have given you this simile to convey a message. The message is this: The fortress stands for this body—composed of four elements, born of mother & father, nourished with rice & barley gruel, subject to constant rubbing & abrasion, to breaking & falling apart. The six gates stand for the six internal sense media. The gatekeeper stands for mindfulness. The swift pair of messengers stands for tranquility *(samatha)* and insight *(vipassana)*. The commander of the fortress stands for consciousness. The central square stands for the four great elements: the earth-property, the liquid-property, the fire-property, & the wind-property. The accurate report stands for Unbinding *(nibbana)*. The route by which they had come stands for the noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

—SN XXXV.204

On one occasion Ven. Ananda was staying in Kosambi, at Ghosita's monastery. There he addressed the monks, "Friends!"

"Yes, friend," the monks responded.

Ven. Ananda said: "Friends, whoever—monk or nun—declares the attainment of arahantship in my presence, they all do it by means of one or another of four paths. Which four?

"There is the case where a monk has developed insight preceded by tranquility. As he develops insight preceded by tranquility, the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it & pursuing it—his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Then there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility preceded by insight. As he develops tranquility preceded by insight, the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it & pursuing it—his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Then there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility in tandem with insight. As he develops tranquility in tandem with insight, the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it & pursuing it—his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Then there is the case where a monk's mind has its restlessness concerning the Dhamma [Comm: the corruptions of insight] well under control. There comes a time when his mind grows steady inwardly, settles down, and becomes unified & concentrated. In him the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it & pursuing it—his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Whoever—monk or nun—declares the attainment of arahantship in my presence, they all do it by means of one or another of these four paths."

—AN IV.170

"Monks, these four types of individuals are to be found existing in world. Which four?

"There is the case of the individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness, but not insight into phenomena through heightened discernment. Then there is the case of the individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, but not internal tranquility of awareness. Then there is the case of the individual who has attained neither internal tranquility of awareness nor insight into phenomena through heightened discernment. And then there is the case of the individual who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

"The individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness, but not insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, should approach an individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment and ask him: 'How should fabrications be regarded? How should they be investigated? How should they be seen with insight?' The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: 'Fabrications should be regarded in this way. Fabrications should be investigated in this way. Fabrications should be seen in this way with insight.' Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

"As for the individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, but not internal tranquility of awareness, he should approach an individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness... and ask him, 'How should the mind be steadied? How should it be made to settle down? How should it be unified? How should it be concentrated?' The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: 'The mind should be steadied in this way. The mind should be made to settle down in this way. The mind should be unified in this way. The mind should be concentrated in this way.' Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

"As for the individual who has attained neither internal tranquility of awareness nor insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, he should approach an individual who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment...and ask him, 'How should the mind be steadied? How should it be made to settle down? How should it be unified? How should it be concentrated? How should fabrications be regarded? How should they be investigated? How should they be seen with insight?' The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: 'The mind should be steadied in this way. The mind should be made to settle down in this way. The mind should be unified in this way. The mind should be concentrated in this way. Fabrications should be regarded in this way. Fabrications should be investigated in this way. Fabrications should be seen in this way with insight.' Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

"As for the individual who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, his duty is to make an effort in establishing ('tuning') those very same skillful qualities to a higher degree for the ending of the (mental) fermentations.

"These are four types of individuals to be found existing in world."

—AN IV.94

"Not knowing, not seeing the body as it actually is present; not knowing, not seeing tactile sensations ... consciousness at the body... contact at the body as they actually are present; not knowing, not seeing whatever arises conditioned through contact at the body—experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—as it actually is present, one is infatuated with the body ... ideas ... consciousness at the body... contact at the body ... whatever arises conditioned by contact at the body and is experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

"For him—infatuated, attached, confused, not remaining focused on their drawbacks—the five clinging-aggregates head toward future accumulation. The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now this & now that—grows within him. His bodily disturbances & mental disturbances grow. His bodily torments & mental torments grow. His bodily distresses & mental distresses grow. He is sensitive both to bodily stress & mental stress….

"However, knowing & seeing the body as it actually is present, knowing & seeing tactile sensations ... consciousness at the body... contact at the body as they actually are present, knowing & seeing whatever arises conditioned through contact at the body—experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—as it actually is present, one is not infatuated with the body ... tactile sensations ... consciousness at the body ... contact at the body ... whatever arises conditioned by contact at the body and is experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

"For him—uninfatuated, unattached, unconfused, remaining focused on their drawbacks—the five clinging-aggregates head toward future diminution. The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now this & now that—is abandoned by him. His bodily disturbances & mental disturbances are abandoned. His bodily torments & mental torments are abandoned. His bodily distresses & mental distresses are abandoned. He is sensitive both to ease of body & ease of awareness.

"Any view belonging to one who has come to be like this is his right view. Any resolve, his right resolve. Any effort, his right effort. Any mindfulness, his right mindfulness. Any concentration, his right concentration: just as earlier his actions, speech, & livelihood were already well-purified. Thus for him, having thus developed the noble eightfold path, the four frames of reference go to the culmination of their development. The four right exertions ... the four bases of power ... the five faculties ... the five strengths ... the seven factors for Awakening go to the culmination of their development. [And] for him these two qualities occur in tandem: tranquility & insight.

"He comprehends through direct knowledge whatever qualities are to be comprehended through direct knowledge, abandons through direct knowledge whatever qualities are to be abandoned through direct knowledge, develops through direct knowledge whatever qualities are to be developed through direct knowledge, and realizes through direct knowledge whatever qualities are to be realized through direct knowledge.

"And what qualities are to be comprehended through direct knowledge? 'The five clinging-aggregates,' should be the reply. Which five? Form as a clinging-aggregate ... feeling ... perception ... fabrications ... consciousness as a clinging-aggregate. These are the qualities that are to be comprehended through direct knowledge.

"And what qualities are to be abandoned through direct knowledge? Ignorance & craving for becoming: these are the qualities that are to be abandoned through direct knowledge.

"And what qualities are to be developed through direct knowledge? Tranquility & insight: these are the qualities that are to be developed through direct knowledge.

"And what qualities are to be realized through direct knowledge? Clear knowing & release: these are the qualities that are to be realized through direct knowledge."

—MN 149

[Insight & tranquility as a prerequisite for jhana:] "If a monk would wish, 'May I attain—whenever I want, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhanas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here-&-now,' then he should be one who brings the precepts to perfection, who is committed to mental tranquility, who does not neglect jhana, who is endowed with insight, and who frequents empty dwellings.

—AN X.71

VI. Mindfulness / Jhana

Visakha: "Now what is concentration, what qualities are its themes, what qualities are its requisites, and what is its development?"

Sister Dhammadinna: "Singleness of mind is concentration; the four frames of reference are its themes; the four right exertions are its requisites; and any cultivation, development, & pursuit of these qualities is its development."

—*MN 44*

[A certain monk:] "May the Blessed One teach me the Dhamma in brief! May the One Well-gone teach me the Dhamma in brief! It may well be that I will understand the Blessed One's words. It may well be that I will become an heir to the Blessed One's words."

[The Buddha:] "Then, monk, you should train yourself thus: 'My mind will be established inwardly, well-composed. No evil, unskillful qualities, once they have arisen, will remain consuming the mind.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then you should train yourself thus: 'Good will, as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture ... not accompanied by rapture ... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: 'Compassion, as my awareness-release .... Appreciation, as my awareness-release .... Equanimity, as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture ... not accompanied by rapture ... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: 'I will remain focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture ... not accompanied by rapture ... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should train yourself: 'I will remain focused on feelings in & of themselves .... the mind in & of itself ... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture ... not accompanied by rapture ... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, then wherever you go, you will go in comfort. Wherever you stand, you will stand in comfort. Wherever you sit, you will sit in comfort. Wherever you lie down, you will lie down in comfort."

Then that monk, having been admonished by the admonishment from the Blessed One, got up from his seat and bowed down to the Blessed One, circled around him, keeping the Blessed One to his right side, and left. Then, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus he became another one of the Arahants.

—*AN VIII.63*

"Having abandoned the five hindrances—imperfections of awareness that weaken discernment—the monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings...mind...mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—

putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. Just as if an elephant trainer were to plant a large post in the ground and were to bind a forest elephant to it by the neck in order to break it of its forest habits, its forest memories & resolves, its distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the forest, to make it delight in the town and to inculcate in it habits congenial to human beings; in the same way, these four frames of reference are bindings for the awareness of the disciple of the noble ones, to break him of his household habits, his household memories & resolves, his distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the household life, for the attainment of the right method and the realization of Unbinding.

"Then the Tathagata trains him further: 'Come, monk, remain focused on the body in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with the body. Remain focused on feelings in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with feelings. Remain focused on the mind in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with mind. Remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with mental qualities.' With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters the second jhana...."

—*MN 125*

"Monks, those who are new, not long gone-forth, only recently come to this doctrine & discipline, should be roused, encouraged, & exhorted by you to develop the four frames of reference [in this way]:

"'Come, friends, remain focused on the body in & of itself—being ardent, alert, with your minds unified, clear, concentrated, & single-minded for knowledge of the body as it actually is. Remain focused on feelings in & of themselves...focused on the mind in & of itself...focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, one-pointed, with your minds unified, clear, concentrated, & single-minded for knowledge of mental qualities as they actually are.'

"Monks, even those who are learners—who have yet to attain their hearts' desire, who stay resolved on the unsurpassed security from bondage—even they remain focused on the body in & of itself—being ardent, alert, one-pointed, with their minds unified, clear, concentrated, & single-minded for complete comprehension of the body. They remain focused on feelings in & of themselves...focused on the mind in & of itself...focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, one-pointed, with their minds unified, clear, concentrated, & single-minded for complete comprehension of mental qualities.

"Even those who are arahants—whose mental fermentations are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who are released through right gnosis—even they remain focused on the body in & of itself—being ardent, alert, one-pointed, with their minds unified, clear, concentrated, & single-minded, disjoined from the body. They remain focused on feelings in & of themselves...focused on the mind in & of itself...focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, one-pointed, with their minds unified, clear, concentrated, & single-minded, disjoined from mental qualities.

"So even those who are new, not long gone-forth, only recently come to this doctrine & discipline, should be roused, encouraged, & exhorted by you to develop the four frames of reference [in this way]."

—SN XLVII.4

"Suppose that there is a foolish, inexperienced, unskillful cook who has presented a king or a king's minister with various kinds of curry: mainly sour, mainly bitter, mainly peppery, mainly sweet, alkaline or non-alkaline, salty or non-salty. He does not take note of (lit: pick up on the theme of) his master, thinking, 'Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry, or he praises that curry'....As a result, he is not rewarded with clothing or wages or gifts. Why is that? Because the foolish, inexperienced, unskillful cook does not pick up on the theme of his own master.

"In the same way, there are cases where a foolish, inexperienced, unskillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, his mind does not become concentrated, his defilements [Comm: the five Hindrances] are not abandoned. He does not take note of that fact (does not pick up on that theme). He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves...the mind in & of itself...mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, his mind does not become concentrated, his defilements are not abandoned. He does not take note of that fact. As a result, he is not rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, nor with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the foolish, inexperienced, unskillful monk does not take note of his own mind (does not pick up on the theme of his own mind).

"Now suppose that there is a wise, experienced, skillful cook who has presented a king or a king's minister with various kinds of curry....He takes note of his master, thinking, 'Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry or he praises that curry'....As a result, he is rewarded with clothing, wages, & gifts. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful cook picks up on the theme of his own master.

"In the same way, there are cases where a wise, experienced, skillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself...feelings in & of themselves...the mind in & of itself...mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, his mind becomes concentrated, his defilements are abandoned. He takes note of that fact. As a result, he is rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, together with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful monk picks up on the theme of his own mind."

—SN XLVII.8

"Ananda, if a monk or nun remains with mind well established in the four frames of reference, he/she may be expected to realize greater-than-ever distinction.

"There is the case of a monk who remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, a fever based on the body arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme [Comm: such as recollection of the Buddha]. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows serene. His body serene, he feels pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, 'I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw [my mind from the inspiring theme].' He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, 'I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.'

"Furthermore, he remains focused on feelings...mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, a fever based on mental qualities arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows serene. His body serene, he is sensitive to pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, 'I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw.' He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, 'I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.'

"This, Ananda, is development based on directing. And what is development based on not directing? A monk, when not directing his mind to external things, discerns, 'My mind is not directed to external things. It is not attentive to what is in front or behind. It is released & undirected. And furthermore I remain focused on the body in & of itself. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.'

"When not directing his mind to external things, he discerns, 'My mind is not directed to external things. It is not attentive to what is in front or behind. It is released & undirected. And furthermore I remain focused on feelings... mind...mental qualities in & of themselves. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.'

"This, Ananda, is development based on not directing.

"Now, Ananda, I have taught you development based on directing and development based on not directing. What a teacher should do out of compassion for his disciples, seeking their welfare, that I have done for you. Over there are [places to sit at] the foot of trees. Over there are empty dwellings. Practice jhana, Ananda. Do not be heedless. Do not be remorseful in the future. That is our instruction to you all."

—SN XLVII.10

VII. Jhana / Discernment

There is no jhana
for one with no discernment,
no discernment
for one with no jhana.
But one with both jhana
& discernment:
he's on the verge
of Unbinding.

—*Dhp 372*

[Jhana as a prerequisite for liberating insight:] "If a monk would wish, 'May I—with the ending of mental fermentations—remain in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here-&-now,' then he should be one who brings the precepts to perfection, who is committed to mental calm, who does not neglect jhana, who is endowed with insight, and who frequents empty dwellings.

—*AN X.71*

"Monks, Sariputta is wise, of great discernment, deep discernment, wide ... joyous ... rapid ... quick ... penetrating discernment....There is the case where Sariputta...enters & remains in the first jhana. Whatever qualities there are in the first jhana—applied thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness (*vl.* intent), desire, decision, persistence, mindfulness, equanimity, & attention—he ferrets them out one by one. Known to him they arise, known to him they remain, known to him they subside. He discerns, 'So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.' He remains unattracted & unrepelled with regard to those qualities, independent, detached, released, dissociated, with an awareness rid of barriers. He understands, 'There is a further escape,' and pursuing it, he confirms that 'There is.' (Similarly with the levels of jhana up through the sphere of nothingness.)

"Furthermore, completely transcending the sphere of nothingness, he enters & remains in the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. He emerges mindful from that attainment. On emerging...he regards the past qualities that have ceased & changed: 'So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.' He remains unattracted & unrepelled with regard to those qualities, independent, detached, released, dissociated, with an awareness rid of barriers. He understands, 'There is a further escape,' and pursuing it, he confirms that 'There is.'

"Furthermore, completely transcending the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters & remains in the cessation of feeling & perception. When he sees with discernment, his fermentations are totally ended. He emerges mindful from that attainment. On emerging...he regards the past qualities that have ceased & changed: 'So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.' He remains unattracted & unrepelled with regard to those qualities, independent, detached, released, dissociated, with an awareness rid of barriers. He understands, 'There is no further escape,' and pursuing it, he confirms that 'There isn't.'

"If someone, rightly describing a person, were to say, 'He has attained mastery & perfection in noble virtue... noble concentration...noble discernment...noble release,' he would be rightly describing Sariputta.... Sariputta takes the unexcelled wheel of Dhamma set rolling by the Tathagata, and keeps it rolling rightly."

—*MN 111*

"I tell you, the ending of the fermentations depends on the first jhana...the second jhana...the third...the fourth...the sphere of the infinitude of space...the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness...the sphere of nothingness...the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.

"'I tell you, the ending of the fermentations depends on the first jhana.' Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said?... Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born of withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perceptions, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, a void, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the mental fermentations. Or, if not, then through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and through the total wasting away of the five lower fetters [self-identity views, grasping at precepts & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

"'I tell you, the ending of the fermentations depends on the first jhana.' Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said."

[Similarly with the other levels of jhana up through the sphere of nothingness.]

"Thus, as far as the perception-attainments go, that is as far as gnosis-penetration goes. As for these two spheres—the attainment of the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception & the attainment of the cessation of feeling & perception—I tell you that they are to be rightly explained by those monks who are meditators, skilled in attaining, skilled in attaining & emerging, who have attained & emerged in dependence on them."

—AN IX.36

Then Dasama the householder from the city of Atthaka went to where Ven. Ananda was staying and on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ananda, "Is there, venerable sir, any one condition explained by the Blessed One...whereby a monk—dwelling heedful, ardent, & resolute—releases his mind that is as yet unreleased, or whereby the fermentations not yet brought to an end come to an end, or whereby he attains the unsurpassed security from bondage that he has not yet attained?"

Ananda: "Yes, householder, there is....There is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the first jhana....He notices that 'This first jhana is fabricated & willed.' He discerns, 'Whatever is fabricated & willed is inconstant & subject to cessation.' Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the fermentations. Or, if not, then through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and through the total wasting away of the five lower fetters, he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world."

[Similarly with the other levels of jhana up through the sphere of nothingness and the four awareness-releases based on good will, compassion, appreciation, & equanimity.]

—*AN XI.17*

Sariputta: "This Unbinding is pleasant, friends. This Unbinding is pleasant."

Udayin: "But what is the pleasure here, my friend, where there is nothing felt?"

Sariputta: "Just that is the pleasure here, my friend: where there is nothing felt. There are these five strands of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing; sounds ... smells ... tastes ... tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Whatever pleasure or joy arises in dependence on these five strands of sensuality, that is sensual pleasure.

"Now there is the case where a monk—quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhana....If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *sensuality*, that is an affliction for him. Just as pain arises as an affliction for a healthy person, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality that beset the monk is an affliction for him. Now the Blessed One has said that whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant.

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the second jhana....If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *directed thought*, that is an affliction for him....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the third jhana....If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *rapture,* that is an affliction for him....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the fourth jhana....If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *equanimity,* that is an affliction for him....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the sphere of the infinitude of space. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *form,* that is an affliction for him....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the sphere of the infinitude of space,* that is an affliction for him....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the sphere of nothingness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness,* that is an affliction for him....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness,* that is an affliction for him...whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant.

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And, having seen [that] with discernment, his fermentations are completely ended. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant."

—AN IX.34

"[On attaining the fourth level of jhana] there remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable & luminous. Just as if a skilled goldsmith or goldsmith's apprentice were to prepare a furnace, heat up a crucible, and, taking gold with a pair of tongs, place it in the crucible. He would blow on it periodically, sprinkle water on it periodically, examine it periodically, so that the gold would become refined, well-refined, thoroughly refined, flawless, free from dross, pliant, malleable & luminous. Then whatever sort of ornament he had in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—it would serve his purpose. In the same way, there remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable, & luminous. He [the meditator] discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space, I would develop the mind along those lines, and thus this equanimity of mine—thus supported, thus sustained—would last for a long time. (Similarly with the dimensions of the infinitude of consciousness, nothingness, & neither perception nor non-perception.)'

"He discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space and to develop the mind along those lines, that would be fabricated. (Similarly with the dimensions of the infinitude of consciousness, nothingness, & neither perception nor non-perception.)' He neither fabricates nor wills for the sake of becoming or un-becoming. This being the case, he is not sustained by anything in the world (does not cling to anything in the world). Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

—*MN 140*

"Further, Ananda, the monk—not attending to the perception of wilderness, not attending to the perception of earth—attends to the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of wilderness are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of earth are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of wilderness. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of earth. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

"Further, Ananda, the monk—not attending to the perception of earth, not attending to the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space—attends to the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of earth are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of earth. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

[Similarly with the dimension of nothingness and the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.]

"Further, Ananda, the monk—not attending to the perception of the dimension of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—attends to the singleness based on the theme-less concentration of awareness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its themeless concentration of awareness.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances would exist based on the perception of the dimension of nothingness are not present. Whatever disturbances would exist based on the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, are not present. And there is only this modicum of disturbance: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of nothingness. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. There is only this non-emptiness: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

"Further, Ananda, the monk—not attending to the perception of the dimension of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—attends to the singleness based on the theme-less concentration of awareness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its theme-less concentration of awareness.

"He discerns that 'This theme-less concentration of awareness is fabricated & mentally fashioned.' And he discerns that 'Whatever is fabricated & mentally fashioned is inconstant & subject to cessation.' For him—thus knowing, thus seeing—the mind is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances would exist based on the fermentation of sensuality...the fermentation of becoming...the fermentation of ignorance, are not present. And there is only this modicum of disturbance: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the fermentation of sensuality ... becoming ... ignorance. And there is just this non-emptiness: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, pure—superior & unsurpassed."

—*MN 121*

Glossary

Abhidhamma: The third of the three "baskets" or collections that comprise the Pali Canon, devoted to establishing the precise taxonomy of the terms found in the other two collections. Generally believed to be a later addition to the Canon.

Āsava: Fermentation; effluent. The mind has four types of fermentation: sensual passion, views, becoming, and ignorance.

Arahant: "Worthy one; pure one." A person who has mastered the kamma that puts an end to kamma, and thus is not destined for future rebirth.

Bodhisatta: A being destined for Awakening. After his Awakening, the Buddha used this term to refer to himself prior to his Awakening.

Dhamma: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) *nibbāna* (although there are passages describing nibbāna as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: Dharma.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. This term is related to the verb *jhāyati*, which means to burn with a still, steady flame.

Kamma: Intentional act. Sanskrit form: Karma.

Nibbāna: Literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. "Total nibbāna" in some contexts denotes the experience of Awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant. Sanskrit form: Nirvāṇa.

Sangha: The Community of the Buddha's followers. This term has two levels of meaning. On the conventional level it refers to ordained monks and nuns. On the ideal level, it refers to all those—lay or ordained—who have reached at least the first of the four levels of Awakening.

Sutta: Discourse.

Tathāgata: Literally, "one who has become authentic *(tatha-āgata),*" an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Further Reading

For further reading on contemplation of the body, see the following books and dhamma talks available on Access to Insight (www.accesstoinsight.org):

Ajaan Mun Bhuridatto: *A Heart Released*

Ajaan Mun Bhuridatto: *The Ever-present Truth*

Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo: *The Craft of the Heart*

Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo: *Frames of Reference*

Ajaan Maha Boowa Ñanasampanno: "The Work of a Contemplative"

Ajaan Maha Boowa Ñanasampanno: "An Heir to the Dhamma"

Ajaan Suwat Suvaco: "This Body of Mine"

Ajaan Suwat Suvaco: "Disenchantment"

For supplemental reading on the issues of jhana, mindfulness, and insight, see the articles, "The Path of Mindfulness and Concentration" and "One Tool Among Many," also available on Access to Insight.

Further Reading

For further reading on contemplation of the body, see the following books and dhamma talks available on Access to Insight (www.accesstoinsight.org):

Ajaan Mun Bhuridatto, *A Heart Released*

Ajaan Mun Bhuridatto, *The Ever-Present Truth*

Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo, *Keeping the Breath in Mind*

Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo, *Frames of Reference*

Ajaan Maha Boowa Ñāṇasampanno, "The Work of the Contemplative"

Ajaan Maha Boowa Ñāṇasampanno, "An Heir to the Dhamma"

Ajaan Suwat Suvaco, "This Body of Mine"

Ajaan Suwat Suvaco, "Disenchantment"

For supplemental reading on the issues of jhana, mindfulness, and insight, see the articles, "The Path of Mindfulness and Concentration" and "One Tool Among Many," also available on Access to Insight.

VIPASSANA

Mindfulness Meditation

In The Mahasi Tradition

Compiled by jinavamsa

FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION ONLY
Published by jinavamsa aka leong yok kee

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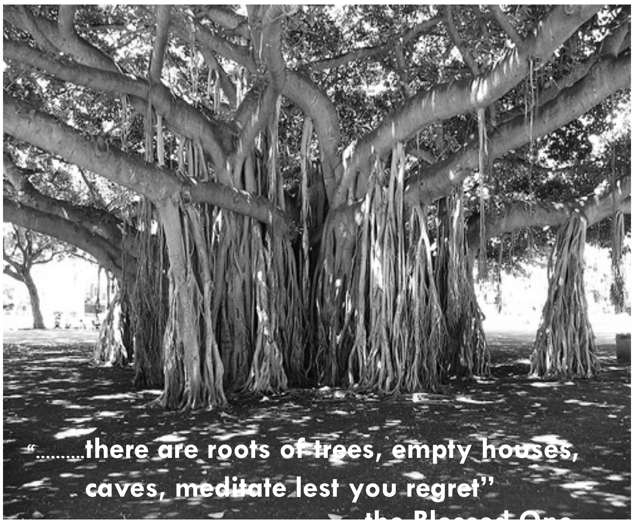

"..........there are roots of trees, empty houses,
caves, meditate lest you regret"
the Blessed One

In The Mahasi Tradition

a jinavamsa Dhamma Literature

VIPASSANA

Mindfulness Meditation

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DEDICATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This present volume of the Blessed One's Teaching of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or Vipassana Bhavana (Meditation) have been inspired by the compilation of the same by my dear Dhamma friend and respected Elder in the Dhamma; Brother Tan Guan Chai. Brother Guan Chai is a devoted student of the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, of whom my dear departed teacher, The Venerable Acara Suvanno Mahathera was also a devoted and diligent student.

In that admirable compilation; A Collection of Mahasi Sayadaw's Discourses on Meditation, Brother Guan Chai put together 7 of Mahasi Sayadaw's Discourses on Vipassana Bhavana. This present compilation serves to complement Brother Guan Chai's meritorious labour by presenting Vipassana Bhavana as taught by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw in a concise form. As an analogy, this present volume would serve as a "tika" to the volume presented by Brother Guan Chai and also serves as a token of admiration for the great Dhamma Duta, Brother Guan Chai has performed throughout his life.

For those who are not familiar with the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw's Discourses, it would be to their gain to source a copy of Brother Guan Chai's compilation of the Biography of the Mahasi Sayadaw. In that volume would be detailed all the information of the Venerable Sayadaw and his work.

The Venerable Mahasi Saydaw propounded a method of training in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as brought to him by his own teacher (the Venerable Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw), which proved to be effective, and this sequence of training is now known as the Mahasi Tradition of training.

This acknowledgement can only be complete by reference to the editorial work by Ms Carol Law in painstakingly weeding out the unsound grammar I have applied in this compilation. Thanks also to her and a few good Dhamma Friends, Gary Chan, Lai Mun and Brother Guan Chai who have critiqued the original rendering of the cover for this volume to the present copy. To them and to contributors who aided in the financial aspect of this compilation…Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu; and may all beings share in the merits of this Dhammaduta.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa

PREFACE

In today's lax moral living, humans have thrown all cautions to the wind in their desire for sensual gratification. This was apparent to the Blessed One right from the moment of His Enlightenment 2600 years ago; He proclaimed:

This Dhamma which I have realised is indeed profound, difficult to perceive, difficult to comprehend, tranquil, exalted, not within the sphere of logic, subtle, and only those few who are wise can understand; other beings are attached to material pleasures.

With difficulty have I comprehended the Dhamma. There is no need to proclaim it now. This Dhamma is not easily understood by those who are dominated by lust and hatred. The lust-ridden, shrouded in darkness, do not see this Dhamma, which goes against the stream, which is abstruse, profound, difficult to perceive and subtle.

As the Blessed One reflected in this manner, He was not disposed to expound the Dhamma.

That scenario was 2600 years ago! The situation has not change for the better. The great meditation teacher, the Venerable Aggamaha Pandita Mahasi Sayadaw remarked: 'Humans more than others (in this the Sayadaw included devas, brahmas, and all other living beings) are making all possible efforts to indulge in sensual pleasures! Their efforts are mainly directed to physical well being and material gains. What these humans fail to see is that happiness and all forms of passions are conditioned by attitudes of mind. Not knowing this simple truth, very few will devote time to mental and spiritual development and training'.

Humans spend a great amount of time and money on outward appearances; beautifying themselves, living luxurious lives, improving their lives with wealth and health, having beautiful family members and friends, competing to live in the lap of luxury all their lives, having servants and helpers, eating and drinking to their hearts' delight. If you observe carefully, all these are of a material nature.

They fail to realise that all these mundane aggrandisements are but temporary joys that can and will be cut off at any moment of time, which eventuality, they of course are reluctant to recognise and accept, in the false belief that they themselves are able to position their own lives as and what they desire. All people subscribe to the myth that they are the 'captains of their own lives'. Their unhappiness and disappointments are truly great when the truth is finally forced onto them that such is not the case! The process of death and sickness is irrevocable! No one can escape them!

The Blessed One taught that the practice of Mindfulness is for all who seek to grow spiritually and attain to Enlightenment, the end of all suffering. He taught that the way to Nibbana can only be through mindfulness training; Satipatthana. The Sayadaw further added: The Blessed One, described a practical path to bring about this realisation. The method taught by the Blessed One can be practised by all, regardless of religious background, as its goal is simply to expand the practitioner's consciousness and bring him face to face with his mind. The Blessed One pointed out that we identify thoughts, feelings, impulses, emotions or sensations that arise in our minds as belonging to us; as empowered by ourselves; as created by an independent ego within us. Such mental activities delude us, and obliviously carry us along on a colourful journey to misery and destruction we do not immediately recognise as such.

The Blessed One explained that when we are able to observe the rise and fall, the appearance and disappearance of these various thoughts and feelings, we will be able to realise their inconsistent and impermanent nature, their inherent quality of dis-ease and most importantly, their ownerless state. When we are able to recognise these negative qualities of our thoughts and feelings, we will gradually develop a sense of distance and detachment from them.

Then with this right understanding of their nature, we will no longer feel a sense of ownership of these thoughts, feelings, impulses, emotions or sensations.

This sense of distance away and detachment from our various thoughts, feelings, impulses and sensations will lead us to a deep inner calm. Through constant contemplation, we will develop insights leading to supra-mundane wisdom, which has the power to open up our minds and break up the veils of illusion and ignorance to the reality that lies hidden within and beyond. The Blessed One taught that the workings of the mind are in reality, impersonal processes composed of large numbers of elementary psychic events He described as **dhammas**.

Through mindful observation of the workings of the mind and inferential knowledge gathered from the same source, one comes to realise that there is not found a permanent abiding entity, described as a self, an ego or a soul within anyone of us. The result of this realisation is an ever increasing detachment from the sensations, feelings, thoughts, ideas, impulses, etc, that are constantly arising. The full realisation of this insight develops paññã or wisdom that recognises the impermanency, dis-ease and ownerless state of these mental activities, furthering the sense of detachment from them.

The Blessed One taught a practical way of moral life; not just another system of metaphysical philosophy. It examines the ills of this sentient life, pin-points their causes, prescribes the removal of the causes, and shows the Way to the release from all suffering. Anyone can walk along the Way. But he must make the effort to step and walk. No one will pick him up or offer him a free ride.

You yourself must make the effort. Blessed Ones only point the way. Those who have entered the Path and who meditate will be freed from the fetters of illusion. – Dhammapada 276

What then is this Way to liberation? The Blessed One tells us that there is but One Way; the Way of Establishing Mindfulness that serves as the foundation of the whole system of insight meditation leading to freedom from unwholesome mental activities and delusion and opening the doors to Nibbana. The Blessed One seeked the Way, found it, traversed it Himself, and only then did He, from His experience teach it to His followers; however, not all were able to ingest and realise the message He gave them.

So have I, monks, seen An Ancient Way, An Ancient Road followed by the Wholly Awakened Ones of olden times. Along that have I trodden, and the matters that I have come to know fully as I was going along it I have told to the monks, nuns, men and women lay followers. (Sam. ii 105)

One attribute of the Blessed One's Dhamma is that it invites everyone to "come-and-see" (ehipassiko)'; it is not a "must" see or "must" do. Sadly, though the invitation has been open from day one, it has largely been ignored and left in the cold, as few truly "saw" the gems of truth in His words. As such few will awake and follow strictly to the tenets of His Dhamma to find the Truth. It only remains for the true aspirant after liberation to awake and join the few in their quest for Freedom from suffering. Make no mistake, though many have "mouthed" the Blessed One's Dhamma, few have taken it up in all sincerity and honesty; few have seen the true "light" to want to practise His Dhamma.

Insight Meditation is for everyone, robed or lay, and all can attain to the stage of an arahant and be freed from the rounds of rebirth.

jinavamsa aka yok kee leong quoting: Bhadanta Sobhana,
Bukit Tinggi, Pahang Aggamaha Pandita
April, 2011 Mahasi Sayadaw

PREAMBLE

The late Venerable Suvanno Mahathera (1920-2007) of the Buddhist Hermitage, Lunas, popularly addressed as Bhante said: To effectively apply the knowledge of Satipatthana Vipassana (Meditation on Mindfulness) certain premise must be introduced in the beginning. This is a prerequisite to the understanding of the terms and phrases applied in the literature given here.

FIRST: In everything that we do, success can only come about when we begin with a correct understanding or view of our intended goal. Such correct view can only be brought to fruition through a correct practice, which in itself can only be realised through proper investigation and guidance.

The Blessed One has said very clearly that His Dhamma can only be realised through a gradual training and He gave the technique for such a training.

To do himself justice and to be convinced about the Dhamma, the meditator should investigate thoroughly the merits of what he has been told. Only when he is sufficiently impressed with the truth should he then begin to practise the Dhamma; such a practice will definitely gain him insights into the reality of the Dhamma; only in this way will he realise the wisdom and merits of the Blessed One's Teachings. For the Blessed One has advised that one should investigate well before one takes up what one hears. The Blessed One advised:

Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing, nor upon tradition, rumor, what is in a scripture, surmise, an axiom, specious reasoning, a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over, another's seeming ability, the consideration, "The monk is our teacher. Kalamas, when you yourselves know: These things are good; these things are not blameworthy; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness; enter on and abide in them."

The phrase; **'when you yourself know'**, is to mean acquiring a knowledge, especially a supramundane knowledge, **based on one's own experience, a reality, a direct knowledge as realised by oneself**; not from books or hearsay.

Wisdom of a Vipassana practitioner is not acquired in the same manner of a formal education. The knowledge, intelligence and mundane wisdom of an ordinary mortal is acquired through academic means, such as schools, colleges, universities, books and such like material; whereas the knowledge and wisdom realised by a Vipassana practitioner is solely through the practice of mindfulness exercise; an experiential realisation.

Therefore, the correct view in wanting to learn and practise Vipassana must be soundly established in the meditator's mind.

SECOND: What then is the correct view when practising Vipassana? The Blessed One answered:

"This is the only way for the purification of beings, the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, the destroying of pain and grief, reaching the right path; the realisation of nibbana; namely; the Four Foundations of Mindfulness". In other words, the practice of Vipassana.

Vipassana Insight Meditation or Mindfulness Meditation has **freedom from all suffering** as its one and only goal. The very basic nature and universality of its goal puts it into a unique niche where it can be practised by all, regardless of religious beliefs. Its simple practical path to a very profound objective truly appeals to those who are earnestly seeking an end to their pain and sorrows.

The Blessed One's teachings is a universal discipline, suitable for all and for all time; for He invited all (not only "buddhist"): ***"akaliko, ehipasiko..." come and see for yourself, the Dhamma is unconditioned by time or season, it is timeless".***

Therefore, one must view Vipassana as the only way to the eradication of defilement and of reaching Nibbana; and just as climbing a mountain will open up a panorama of sights on the way up, so the practice of Vipassana will bring along many side benefits on the way.

We need not seek them, as long as we practise correctly, the accompanying benefits will blossom forth in their own good time. Without the wisdom of Vipassana, we are blind to the reality inherent in us. Realities are true wisdom in disguise, you need to see reality to realise the kernel of wisdom within.

There are those who may want to invest their time and training with the view that meditation will bring them untold powers. This will be considered a perverted view in the wish to meditate and will bring along painful results that may not only be for this life but lives to come.

THIRD: There is the necessity to unlearn all that one has conceived in regards to the realities of life, its concepts, myths and hearsays; which is to say one must view the practice of Vipassana with a sincere mind. One must start with a clean page; one must be prepared to have fresh pure air breeze through one's mind and cleanse away all the debris that had accumulated and stagnated within for aeons.

FOURTH: To begin your journey to explore and realise the wisdom of Vipassana that will take you to total freedom from all forms of suffering, you need to make a resolve to put great effort into your practice, for the way is like climbing an extremely high mountain, long and arduous; the climb is tough, have no doubt about it, but the end result is worth more; much more than all the pain you will encounter. If you will be but determined, patient and persistent in your effort, you will surely be rewarded by results far, far beyond what you think it is all about. This has been guaranteed by the Blessed One who brought this to us.

You should be firm and determined in your resolve. As a boost to your resolve, carry along in your mind the rarefied thought that all those who had attained total freedom from suffering [**Nibbana** (refer to Appendix)], including the Blessed One Himself, had trodden this very path of practice that you are now about to travel on. The more earnest effort you put into your practice, the more your concentration becomes dynamic and sharp, enabling insight to materialise, so that you will have no obstacles in your path towards fulfilling your resolution. In this you can find no help from anyone, not even from the Blessed One. Each step of your practice must be guided by investigation, patience and wisdom, and never by superstitious beliefs and ignorance. Blind faith and superstition conflict with the arising of insight, creating unnecessary hindrances to your practice.

INSIGHT EXPLAINED

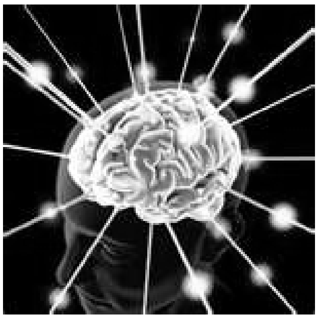
It is timely that a few words on Insight be put forward so as not to be ambiguous about what it is meant. Most dictionaries explain it as a chance to understand something or learn more about it or the ability to notice and understand a lot about people or situations. In the context of Vipassana Mindfulness Meditation, it has the wider in-depth connotation of knowing and realising, not by ideas and concepts but through direct experience, the ultimate reality of ourselves and from this direct experience, we then are able to realise the reality of our existence.

Insight opens up the mind infusing it with clear supramundane wisdom that will wipe away layers of distorted vision accumulated through many rebirths. These distorted visions bring along delusions of the self; clarity of the mind brings along new mental state that sees things in its ultimate essence.

Delusion of "the self" is ingrained in all of us, so much so that we have become dependent on this "myth" identity and hold the belief that this "self" is our alter ego that empowers us in our thoughts, speech and deeds. In our attachment to this "myth ego", we fail to recognise that "man" is a "label" for us to differentiate it from another living being, or for that matter another type of living being, else we cannot distinguish an animal from a human and we cannot separate a female from a male. However, behind this "illusion" of "man" are things that constitute this "man". "Man", in its basic essence is a combination of matter and a set of consciousness that truly empowers "man".

The matter parts are made up of water (blood and lymph and all that are liquid), earthy material (flesh and the material elements such as the organs), air in the form of the breath we breathe to live, and the heat that is built up by the consumption of food. In essence, "man" is but water, material matter, air and heat. These four material elements are the essence of "man" in the ultimate truth. ***Intellectual knowledge is not insight!*** Through Vipassana, we will begin to "see" and realise further the deeper truth of the "make-up" of "man". When our minds are in a dynamic concentration mode, Pure and Clear, both developed through Vipassana Meditation, we see clearly the Mind acting to move the Material Elements. We then realise that it is Mind and Matter (nama and rupa), that constitutes "man". This is elementary insight, beginning of wisdom, the first step in the eradication of ignorance.

MIND LEADS THE WAY



One of the great Truth, the Blessed One taught is that ignorance causes us to see things the way we want to and that is through "rose tinted" delusion of desire; desire for sensual pleasures, desire to gratify our greed for all and anything that please us and desire to rid ourselves of things that are unpleasant.

We are most of the time pickled in ill-will and angered caused by delusion that others are seemingly better or worse and more fortunate or less fortunate than we are; that we are the victims of others.

The fact of the matter is that our lives are built upon misconstrued concepts and ideas and these fallacies confuse and delude us daily and totally; we are conditioned, way before we were even born to be stuck in a whirlpool of delusion, desires, habitual tendencies and a host of pre-acquired passions. Through aeons of life times, we have not been able to see and find our way out of this cesspool we have ignorantly propelled ourselves into.

It is only through insights arising from the practice of Vipassana that we begin to realise that all the beliefs and concepts we imprison ourselves within are not necessarily true, good or wholesome. For example; our new found insights tell us that all things are impermanent; our very lives are impermanent, our possessions are liable to be stolen, lost or possessed by others; whereas all the time till now we have thought otherwise.

We also realise that the "self" that we are deluded to believe we are, is but fleeting and evanescent; without a solid core or any form of powerful ability to help others or ourselves.

Through the practice of Vipassana Meditation, we are looking at ourselves through different lens; the lens of reality and absolute truth. The picture is vastly different from what we had thought them to be. Whereas before, we had lived lives groping and wandering with our visions opaque and muddied; Vipassana helps us define and clear up our dust-filled visions and we can now truly see things as they really are! This is true insight into our existence.

SOME GUIDELINES

At this juncture we share with you some guidelines to help fulfill your aspiration to meditate. The first necessary decision to make is to resolve to meditate alone and not in the company of friends or even a friend! There are many valid reasons why this is so.

- Meditation is a solitary practice and is all about looking into the mind and seeing reality, moment to moment and for this you need to be totally alone to be solely aware of the mind. That is the reason the Blessed One exhorted: "there are roots of trees, empty houses, caves, meditate lest you regret".

- Friends and others have their view points and concepts and may seek to impose them on you or even if not, you may be influenced by certain view points which may appear logical. Their good intentions may not be well placed. "Good" friends have tendencies to share, talk and take pride in the "good" results of their meditation and this sharing may be wrongly construed, contribute to confusion, anger, jealousy and delusion.

- Groups or companion will place undue pressure on you to be result oriented and be "within the group". Peer pressure will jeopardise your meditation efforts. Unnecessary discussions will take place and views expounded by others besides your teacher, may lead to confusion.

- There is Only This One Way to Liberation and this unique way can only be travelled along by one-self alone; one cannot bring along a passenger, a friend, a parent, an offspring, etc. etc.; likewise others cannot bring you along. It is not a social event; it is lonely and it is difficult. This is a solitary journey and you don't need any distractions. Your resolve need to be steely firm to complete the journey!

- It is a long, lonely journey and you need only be responsible for yourself, you may seek the advice of your teacher and guide alone; others will only distract your mind. You should go it alone in your retreat, and leave all mental "baggages" behind and for this period you are going to render full attention to your practice. Make arrangements that all matters are to be handled by others and that you are left alone to meditate.

- Reading by itself cannot lead to true understanding, but theory and practice together will render a profound understanding of the practice and realisation of insight knowledge.

- There are bound to be difficulties as there are in anything new. Only after some practice can results be forthcoming and these “results” may not be what you have expected. Initially, they are not “earth-shattering” and can be so subtle that the immature mind may not see or realise the results as such. Throughout the practice there will be varying experiences, which can have various effects on you and become fruitful only if the practice progresses correctly.

  The moral is: Do not be result oriented in your practice and have no expectation that you will find answers to all your ills and concepts at the first sitting. Worthwhile “results” will appear as your practice matures. When they do you may not even recognise them as such. Your only responsibility is to sit, follow your teacher’s instructions, watch your mind and note arising mental and physical phenomena. Other matters are not your concern during the period of your retreat.

- Mindfully stick to the instructions of the teacher. Paying careful attention to the teacher will enable good progress which will in turn develop confidence in yourself and the practice.

- Sufficient time will be allotted for regular interviews between teacher and students. These interview periods are essential for teacher and students and are usually done on a one on one basis, as these interviews are personal and pertaining to the practice of the student. Here is a good opportunity for both to know each other well and put them on a firm togetherness foundation. Be honest and straight forward in reporting to the teacher. In the course of your practice, you will encounter (in your own concept) good and bad experiences. Each and every individual will have differing experiences in meditation, no two individuals will have exactly the same experiences and results. Hence, you should not discuss your meditative experiences with anyone except your teacher.

- In reporting to the teacher, do so factually. You may be tempted to report what you consider the good side and fail to report plainly and frankly on other experiences.

Though you may think that your sitting is not good or very good as the case may seem, it may not be so in the view of the teacher and only by knowing the true situation, can the teacher be able to give correct and beneficial guidance. Get clarification personally from your teacher on any point you are not clear, do not seek clarification from fellow meditators. No question is silly in the context of your meditation. It is only silly when you plod on based on faulty understanding.

- When encountering difficult stages, you are expected to report these and seek your teacher's support and encouragement. Then only is there any opportunity to give correct advice for the development and progress of the practice. Hence it is very important that you report your experiences to the teacher and only to your teacher very plainly, frankly and factually.

- Be industrious and diligent in your practice. Be always alert and ready to note with continuous effort as soon as you are awake. It is your main and primary duty to note whatever feelings and sensations arising in body and mind. Even minor physical movements such as moving of the hands, movements in the eye-lids, changing of clothes, and such like activities have to be noted with keen awareness. In intensive practice, try very hard and have unshakeable resolution.

- You may, in a hurry, try to do a few things at a time. This is to be discouraged as details in these actions and movements will be missed. In eating, in using toilet facilities too, you should do so with full awareness. Note all movements with awareness without missing anything whatsoever. There is nothing which should not be noted. Every physical and mental occurrence is to be noted mindfully.

- Refrain from talking, eating and sleeping excessively. Talking is a very major obstacle in the practice of meditation. Avoid talking while practising intensive meditation. Should there be a necessity to talk, note the intention to talk and limit the duration of such talks.

- Do not over-eat; you are to eat about four or five mouth full short of a full stomach and fill up with water, soup, or fluid of any kind.

- Sleep should be reduced to a minimum. During intensive practice, four hours of sleep will not cause any problem and you should not have any anxiety of having just four hours of sleep in the daily schedule.

- Practise mindfulness at all times. Keep mindfulness constantly in front of you. Think mindfulness at all times. Make mindfulness your watchword in all thoughts, speech and actions. If you are not mindful, for example, of the sound heard, you may develop either attachment or aversion to the sound. Therefore you should always note sound as such, so that the sound will pass away as merely sound, without any accompanying attachment or aversion.

- Act as if you are a sick person and not move quickly in whatever action you perform. Walk very slowly, eat very slowly, and even talk very slowly. In so doing, you can note all the mental and physical sensations and will soon develop the habit of mindfulness.

- Make persistent and continuous effort to note without let up. Note from the moment of waking up in the morning until going to sleep at night, not only in sitting and walking sessions, but also in the daily activities. When the moment to moment concentration is sustained, you will be able to develop progressive insight knowledge successfully within a reasonable time.

SEEKING A TEACHER

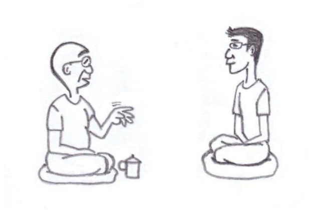
Deciding on a teacher will be the most important step in your aspiration to meditate. You should in all fairness to yourself and the teacher go about this seriously with wisdom and consideration. First of all you must keep in view the true goal of the Blessed One’s teachings, which is nothing less than doing away with ignorance, getting rid of defilement and achieving enlightenment. Therefore, the proper teacher, proper instructions, proper practice and proper conditions are imperative for successful progress through all of the various stages of attainment from the first insight knowledge through to the final result. With this in mind, the **Proper Teacher** is **An Essential Factor**. If one is striving to achieve enlightenment, one's teacher must be a competent, qualified meditation master with real time invested in the practice himself.

The criterion is a teacher who has **Practised Correctly and Well** for a quality period of time. In this it is meant a person who has actually sat and meditated under correct instructions and at the same time well versed in the Dhamma. You will note that “a person” was phrased, which is to indicate that the teacher may not necessary be a monk or a nun. It is immaterial what category the teacher belongs to; robed or lay; as long as he or she has proven meditation and teaching skills and he or she is able to pass them on.

There are those who can teach and there are those who cannot teach as exemplified by a Blessed One and a paccekabuddha. A paccekabuddha is a Buddha, but he is devoid of the skills to pass on the Dhamma and lack the ability to teach meditation. Hence, he does not have the ability to teach though he is already an enlightened being. A Blessed One practises and teaches the Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good at the end.

TEACHER/STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

In the days of the Blessed One, there was no such institution as a meditation centre; the Teacher was the Blessed One Himself and after Him came the arahant teachers (theras). Each had their own students and these were mostly monks. In those days, a teacher was one who was a good friend; a person who was there to help with things pertaining to meditation and Dhamma. He was someone who had extensive practical experience and knowledge about meditation practice and Dhamma and be able to answer questions and help clear difficulties. His responsibility was to teach and it was up to the students to be diligent to meditate; it was not necessary for the teacher to sit and supervise every detail of the students.



In the time of the Blessed One, lay persons as well as monks were His students. The instructions in meditation were given freely. In today’s conditions, we have well laid out meditation centres with monks as teachers; in most cases the students do not have to pay any fees for the practice; however donations are required to maintain the centres and temples. Teachers and students relationship must be well spelled out in order to minimise inconvenience and misunderstanding. There are strict rules concerning student’s behaviour and attitude.

Students should render respect and take heed of the instructions of the meditation teacher seriously and in earnest during the time in training, and be able to receive full attention while at a retreat, as after all it was through a series of qualification before they selected the teacher they now have. If they do not have respect for and confidence in the teacher, they will not give much thought to the teacher's words. Here at the very beginning lies a root cause of failure. So affinity and sincerity is of the utmost importance.

What is really needed is a close bond of friendship between student and teacher in which the teacher demonstrates a fatherly concern while teaching. If there is a relationship akin to a father-and-son affection the atmosphere for training will be comfortable, pleasant and stress free, conducive to learning. With an attitude of respect and confidence in the teacher and sincerity in the training, teacher and students will be mentally together; success in the practice is assured.

For a more meaningful meditation experience, this close bond should be built on confidence in and affection for each other, based on reason, insight and compassion. However, they should not be overly attached to each other.

As for the teacher, he observes the behaviour, manners, mentality and disposition of the students rather than just taking their words at face value. He should examine the students as thoroughly as a doctor would his patient. In an atmosphere of sincerity, respect and confidence students should not be reluctant to talk frankly about their particular disease (mental imperfections); the teacher can then administer his remedy.

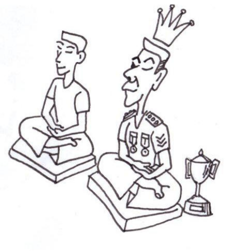
Patience in huge doses is recommended as it takes a long time for a teacher to get to know the temperament of the students.

As valuable time is needed to develop such a state of trust, sincerity and confidentiality between teacher and students, it is advisable that students be discerning to ensure a wise selection so that time is efficiently used in order to avoid "jumping from teacher to teacher".

CAUTION IN MEDITATION

Few people meditate for the right reason; this is understandable as ignorance about the objective of Vipassana meditation is widespread. There are many who meditate in the hope of having some unusual experience as they regard this as progress of their mediation. This is lack of right motivation for the practice of meditation. Right motivation is connected with renunciation (non-greed), goodwill (non-hatred), and non violence.

If one approaches meditation with neither right understanding regarding suffering and its cessation, nor right motives, then one's meditation is liable to seriously go astray. There have, for instance, been those who took up meditation as a way to invest themselves with power, and others who have seen it as a quick way to gain both disciples and riches. Fame may also be an unworthy motive. All these, as motives for meditation, may easily lead the unwary into illness, and sometimes mental unbalance.



Pride is also a great danger. It comes in several forms. One such is the pride of the person who has seen manifestations of light during meditation, and supposes this to be the sign of attainment of results.

Then there is the pride of one who attains to some form of concentration, and as a result assumes that he has attained special powers, and this can be a very powerful factor in convincing himself.

Quite ordinary people who take up meditation may be aware of the common "superior" attitude: "I make an effort, whereas you . . .," or, "I meditate every day, whereas you . . ." Pride is a great obstacle to any progress, and while it is only a Blessed One or an arahant who is entirely rid of it, everyone should have the mindfulness to check it.

There is the danger for the person who constantly checks for progress. He is sure that he is making "progress" because in meditating he sees lights, hears sounds, or feels strange sensations. He becomes more and more fascinated by these phenomena as time goes by, and gradually forgets that he started with the aspiration to find the way to Enlightenment. His "meditation" then degenerates into visions and strange happenings, leading him into states of delusion.

There is no surer way for a meditator to become entangled than this. Fascinating though all such manifestations may be, they should be mindfully noted by resorting to bare attention, never permitting discursive thought regarding them, and thus avoiding these distractions.

Another danger is trying to meditate while one is emotionally insecure, unbalanced or immature. An understanding of the value of meritorious deeds or skillfulness will come in useful here. As merit purifies the mind, it will be an excellent basis for mind-development, and both the ease with which concentration are attained and the ease with which insight arises are to some extent dependent upon merit. Meritorious deeds are not difficult to find in life.

Obviously it follows that to try to practise meditation while all the time retaining one's old cravings, likes and dislikes is, to say the least, making one's path difficult. Meditation implies renunciation, and no practice will be successful unless one is at least prepared to make effort to restrain greed and hatred, check lust, and understand when delusion is clouding the mind.

How far one carries renunciation and whether this involves outward changes (such as becoming a monk or nun), depends much on a person and his circumstances, but one thing is sure: inward renunciation, an attitude of giving-up with regard to both unskillful mental events and bodily indulgence, is absolutely essential.

In certain cases, a meditator, after a long period of non-practise, undertakes a longer period of meditation practice. He tries very hard, but though his energy is ever so great and he sits and sits, walks and walks, and still his mind is disturbed and without peace. He does not realise that meditation is not in fits and starts. It has to be continuous in tandem with retreats and daily mindfulness, each dovetailing into the other. He needs to develop a balance in the faculties; Faith, Exertion, Mindfulness, Concentration and Wisdom.

The meditator needs to realise that meditation is not unlike a balancing act. Initially, with great faith he applies strenuous energy to his practice but he may not have discerned the mental strength he will need for his practice; this will not help in developing concentration; without a firm concentration his mindfulness in the practice will be lax and all these budding and yet undeveloped mental and physical faculties will not contribute to insight arising.

But once these Five Faculties are well developed and are balanced in maturity, they will become Five Strong Pillars for his practice. The equi-balancing of these Five Faculties; Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration based on Wisdom is of great importance in his progress of meditation.

It is through straining or forcing meditation practice that many emotionally disturbed states arise. Sudden bursts of intense anger over insignificant trifles, fierce cravings and lusts, strange delusions and even peculiar fantasies can all be produced from unwise arduous practice.

Those who are without a teacher should proceed with utmost caution, making sure that their development of mindfulness is well advanced indeed. If they are mindful and see that despite their efforts, their meditation practice is making no real difference to their lives in terms of greater internal peace, or externally in terms of meaningful relationship to others, then it should be apparent that something is wrong.

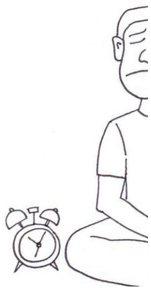
Meditation should then be laid aside for some time while making effort to contact a genuine source of information to seek advice, preferably a living meditation master; in the meantime giving due attention to unsolved moral problems, which unless sorted out, will not permit the mind to develop; and making a great effort to live one's life according to the Blessed One's Dhamma. When quite basic matters of this sort are neglected, one cannot hope to make much progress in the practice.

Significant and dramatic results will never be apparent in the beginning stages of your practice. What will be apparent is the changes that will begin to show in your own mental state and in your speech and deeds. A growing calm and peace will pervade both your mental and physical being. You will stay in these states even under extreme situations of happiness or sadness. Your mindfulness in thought, speech and deed will be your guide under all circumstances. These are but the beginnings of worthwhile results that will be a part of your life as you progress in your practice, leading to further spiritual growth and the renunciation of basic desires and cravings.

SOME UNDESIRABLE PRACTICES

Much good can be said about a regular mode of practice; as in regular mindful observing the rising and falling of the abdomen whenever phenomena arise; regular mindful observing daily activities as a continuation of practice after returning from a retreat and such allied regular habits.

These will heighten mindfulness to a great degree, which should be developed into a lifelong habit in Vipassana meditation. Such regular habits are excellent to develop.



Certain types of habit are crutches for those unconsciously seeking an excuse to enjoy sensual desires rather than to meditate. There are those who meditate according to a fixed time-table and at specific places only. Away from these conditions they just cannot meditate! The problem is that those who lean on these bad habits does not realise that they are doing it as an excuse. You will be hearing remarks such as: "I always mediate at 4am (or whatever time of the day) in the morning, the rest of the day I do not meditate. My best time is at that time".

There are also those who will say: "I have a quota for meditation; I meditate for x amount of hours a day and after that I have finished meditation for the day". The trouble with this is that the meditator is grooving into a rut which he believes is a good habit. He or she has found an excuse NOT to meditate at other times. The mind has been conditioned to meditate at a specific time and place only and other times are not suitable.

What a meditator should do is to meditate and contemplate when the urge to meditate arises, and that is at anytime and any place. This habit of meditating at any time is a good habit as the mind is geared to meditate anytime it sees the opportunity to do so. As we go on our daily activities, there are numerous occasions when we can practise mindfulness, after all Vipassana is about mindfulness. As we walk along the streets going to an appointment, we should be mindful of the steps; as left right, left right while concentrating on mentally observing the movements of each foot as we walk; our ears should be mindful of things we hear around us. We should note; hearing, hearing as we walk slowly and mindfully; sense of smell are another phenomenon that we should be mindful of as we walk along the streets.

As we eat, mindful eating and mindful awareness of phenomena arising from all other sense doors are some other forms of mindfulness exercises we can be engaged in on a daily basis. These exercises will enhance our concentration daily. These are good habits to inculcate.

Meditation is not only about sitting down with eyes closed; it is also about mindfully looking into the mind all the time if at all possible and if not at any time when you can remember; mindfully doing all your daily chores; mindfully attending to personal hygiene; practising mindfulness at every possible moment is meditation. Practising at certain fixed hour only is not meditation, as the rest of the time there is no developing of mindfulness. Mindful of daily activities is a good habit to inculcate as when you go for the next long retreat, your mind is already geared to be mindful.

The other danger is the tendency to attend retreats conducted by a certain teacher only, even though the meditator concerned has meditated with the same teacher for many years. A sign of progress in insight wisdom is the need to go solitary for long retreats on one's own time. When meditators undergo a ten-day retreat for many years with one teacher, he or she will not have progressed much. On the other end of the scale is the meditator who never stops going to retreats; everytime there is a retreat he will be there, regardless who the teacher is. This is the meditator who wants to be known as a meditator. He goes and asks question after question; at the next retreat he does the same thing.

During the days of the Blessed One, monks and lay people will arrive in the morning to see Him for meditation instructions and it was His habit to look into their minds and see at what stage the particular person was in his spiritual development, and then He would give specific instructions and send the meditators away to meditate. Meditators usually, monks, go away for a few days or even months and years. They would return to see the Blessed One only if they had some problems with their meditation and would seek further instructions. Over a period of time most of them will not return to see the Blessed One because they had attained to some achievements and thus did not need any further instructions. They were then on their own. When they have doubts or questions they would return to seek clarification from the Blessed One. Otherwise all meditators will proceed to meditate on their own time. Only when they had attained the supreme goal would they return and thank the Blessed One in gratitude.

The Blessed One advised ***"…..over there are the roots of trees, empty dwellings, practise meditation. Do not be heedless. Do not later fall into regret."*** Not a word was said about having regular time to meditate or to have a fixed time for meditation. Just meditate; there is no need for a teacher to be sitting down in front of you or you in front of the teacher. Seek clarification when you need them otherwise meditate. Do not be heedless; do not fall into regret later.

A SUITABLE PLACE

It is no small measure to say that your progress in your practice has a lot to do with a suitable environment to practise in. A cool, clean, healthy environment will be best as heat is most disturbing for the beginning practitioners. Some may say; "but then how will they know suffering if they are resorted in a cosy, comfortable environment"?

The answer is simple, if serious and sincere meditators have been given the correct tools for their practice, they will most assuredly attain to insights and with the acquisition of insights they will need no prompting to meditate, they will gyrate towards the correct situation that is necessary for further progress.

Just as in carefully nurturing a young infant before it is sent out to the world of sorrows, so is the same with new meditators. They will then have a better chance of survival. In due course they will be able to practise in all sorts of environment; in the middle of a highway is not an impossibility. The secret is proper guidance and practice in the initial stages.

As much as an infant needs tender loving care for healthy growth in its young days so too do new meditators need such tender loving care to nurture them for their future development and eventual acquisition of insights.

Further to a cool, healthy environment is the need for good nutritious food that is easily available. Others are pest free (human pest not excluded), low in noise pollution, good and easy transport system in place, and all facilities for social services such as medical care and such.

Jinavamsa April, 2011 Bukit Tinggi, Bentong, Pahang

BOOK I
FUNDAMENTALS OF VIPASSANA AND THE PRACTICE

A Mahasi Discourse

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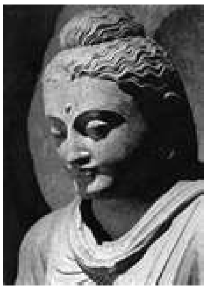

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CALM AND INSIGHT

The Blessed One's Discourses and instructions in meditation are deep and profound; to the uninitiated it can even be construed as illogical. They are in fact exhaustive and detailed. Only the Blessed One, the Buddha is able to shed light on this subject. Essentially, there are two forms of meditation:

Meditation to develop calm and Meditation to develop insight.

MEDITATION TO DEVELOP CALM

On the first form, the Blessed One taught there are 40 objects, that when meditated on with correct view, will give rise to calm but not insight. All these 40 subjects of meditation are for developing concentration. Only respiration and analyses of elements have to do with insight. For insight we need to look further.

MEDITATION TO DEVELOP INSIGHT

The way to develop insight is to meditate and contemplate The Five Aggregates of Attachment or Grasping. (The term aggregate is taken as the sum or assemblage of many separate units, in this case the assemblage of five units. These five units are of a mental and physical nature). The mental and material qualities of human beings are aggregates of grasping (or attachment). They are grasped at with delight by craving in the sense objects'; or they may be grasped at through wrong views (through ignorance of the cause of those wrong views arising). When meditating and contemplating on them, we see them as they really are. If we do not see them as they really are, we will grasp at them and cling to them with craving based on misconceived views. Once we see them as they are, we no longer grasp or be attached to them. In this way insight will arise.

THE FIVE AGGREGATES

These Five Aggregates are; Matter, Feelings, Perception, Volitional Activities and Consciousness. They are the things that we are experiencing all the time; we do not have to seek them. They are around us and in us. ***When we see, they are there in the seeing; when we hear, they are there in the hearing; when we smell, taste, touch, or think, they are there in the smelling, tasting, touching or thinking; when we bend, stretch or move our limbs, the aggregates are there in the bending, stretching or moving.***

However, in our ignorance of reality, we do not know them for what they are. Not knowing them as they really are, we desire and grasp at them with craving and misconceived views. To illustrate:

In the act of bending, initially, there is the intention to bend. Then the different forms of bending appear in the mind. In the intention to bend there are the four mental aggregates. ***The mind that intends to bend is the Consciousness Aggregate* (1)** When we think of bending and then bend, we may have feelings of happiness, or unhappiness, or neither happiness nor unhappiness. If in bending we have happiness, there is pleasant feeling; if while bending we have unhappiness or anger, there is unpleasant feeling. If in bending there is neither happiness nor unhappiness, there is then a feeling of neutrality. ***So, when we have feelings about bending, there is the Feeling Aggregate* (2).** Then, there is perception, the aggregate that recognises the bending. ***This is the Perception Aggregate* (3).**

Then there is the mental state that urges us to bend. It seems as though it were saying, 'bend! bend!' ***This is the Volitional Aggregate* (4).** Therefore, in the intention to bend, ***all Four Mental Aggregates. Feelings, Perception, Volitional Activities and Consciousness,*** are manifested.

Secondly, the movement of the physical part bending is the form of the material matter; ***this is the Fifth Aggregate, the Material Aggregate.***

Therefore, in the Mental intention to bend and the Physical matter bending, there are these Five Aggregates. In reality, every Physical move, involves the Five Aggregates and are to be noted. A non Vipassana practitioner will wrongly view bending as: "It is the 'I', the ego, who intends to bend. It is the 'I' that is bending. It is the 'I' who intends to move. It is the 'I' who moves."

Further, a non meditator believes that there is an Independent Entity **'I'** that have existed before, is now in existence, and will be in existence in the future; which is to say an **'I'** that exist forever. This is the erroneous view of permanence. ***Few realise that there is only 'intention to bend' that exists in the moment.***

Generally, people have the view that; the mind have existed before, and the same **'I'**, that have existed before is now still in existence and is thinking of bending. They believe that: The **'I'** exist now and will go on existing. After moving they further believe; "These **limbs**, this **'I'** always exist." they do not see that the moment of this **limb**, this **'I'** have passed away and the next moment of this **limb** and this **'I'** have appeared and will in the same moment pass away too, so the **limb** and the **'I'** are only momentarily. This, too, is the erroneous view of permanence. It is clinging to what is impermanent as permanent, clinging to what is non personality, non ego, as personality, as ego.

Tiredness and stiffness cause people to move and stretch their bodies and arms. They feel good after this; they believe that this is good and that all these are happiness to them. Dancers bend and stretch as they dance and think it is very nice to do so. They delight in it and are pleased with themselves. People discuss among themselves on pleasant subjects, they are pleased and they believe that this is happiness. They are successful, they believe that it is good; that it is happiness. Through delight and craving, people erroneously cling to things. What is impermanent is taken to be permanent and they find delight in these concepts.

What is not happiness, not personality, but just aggregates of mind and matter, is taken to be happiness, or personality, and delight therein.

These Five Aggregates together are misconceived as being a 'self', an 'ego' or 'I' and people cling to them. So, when bending, stretching or moving, the thinking 'I will bend' is aggregate of clinging. The bending is the aggregate of clinging. The thinking 'I will stretch' is the aggregate of clinging. The stretching is the aggregate of clinging. The thinking 'I will move' is the aggregate of clinging. The moving is the aggregate of clinging. Therefore, these are Aggregates of Clinging.

The same is true in seeing, hearing, etc. When we see, the seat of seeing; the eye is manifest; so is the object being seen, both are material things. They cannot cognise. Through Vipassana, one realises; if one fails to note while seeing, one tends to cling to what is seen and the consciousness of seeing. One thinks the whole body with the eye is permanent, happy, a self and clings to it. One thinks the whole material world with the object is permanent, beautiful, good, happy, and an independent self; they cling to it.

The form Eye and the form Visible Object, are the material aggregates of clinging. When you see, 'Seeing' Consciousness is manifest; it too involves four mental aggregates:

- The mere 'Awareness of Seeing' is the ***Aggregate of Consciousness***.
- 'Pleasure or Displeasure' at Seeing is the ***Aggregate of Feeling***.
- 'That which Perceives' the Object seen is the ***Aggregate of Perception.***
- 'That which brings the Attention to 'See' is the ***Aggregate of Volitional Activities.***

These constitute the Four Mental Aggregates.

If one fails to note while seeing, one is inclined to think that seeing 'has existed before, and exists now'. Or, as one sees good things, one may think 'seeing is good'; one then clings to this view. Thinking this way, one desires good things and enjoys pleasant sights. One goes to watch plays and films at the expense of money, sleep and health, because one thinks it is good to do so; one therefore clings to this view.

To think that, what we see or enjoy is 'I', 'I am enjoying', is to cling with craving and misconceived view. ***Because they cling, the Mind and Matter that manifest in Seeing are said to be Aggregates of Clinging.*** We cling in the same way in hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking. We cling all the more to the mind that thinks, imagines and reflects as being the 'I', the ego. Therefore, the Five Aggregates of Clinging are the Mental-Material things that manifest themselves at the six sense doors; whenever one sees, smells, hears, feels, tastes or thinks. We meditate to realise these aggregates as they are. To meditate on them and see them in their reality, that is insight knowledge.

Insight meditation is meditating and contemplating on the Five Aggregates of Clinging. This is in accordance with the teachings of the Blessed One. The Blessed One taught: ***"Material shape is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not the self. What is not-self, that is not mine; that am I not, this is not myself. One should discern it by right wisdom."*** – Samyutta ii 19

We are to be aware of and note arising mental and physical phenomena in our meditation; in so doing we will observe by direct experience the duality of mind and matter and this will enable us to realise the impermanent nature of such phenomena; that they are sources of suffering and are not "an independent inner self" or "an empowering ego within the living person". We should meditate and note likewise on ***Feelings, Perception, Mental Activities, and Consciousness.*** Regarding these aggregates being **Impermanent**, **Suffering** and **Not-self**; the Blessed One taught:

Seeing all these things, the instructed disciple of the Noble Ones disregards material shape, disregards feeling. He who realises the impermanent, suffering, not-self nature of the Five Aggregates is unimpassioned of material form as he is of Feelings, Perception, Mental Activities and Consciousness; by being unimpassioned, he is passionless. As such, he has broken through to the Noble Path. He is on the Path of the Ariyas. Through passionlessness, he is Emancipated, Free. Once he has entered the Noble Path of passionlessness, he has arrived at the Four Fruitions of Freedom from defilement.In freedom the knowledge comes to be: 'I am free from all defilement'.

When one is freed, one knows for oneself that one is so. In other words, when one have become an Arahant in whom the defilement are extinguished, one knows. By thoroughly attend to these Five Aggregates of Clinging the Fruits of Stream-winning will be realised. Therefore, to be a Stream-Winner and never to be reborn in the four lower states, one has to meditate on the Five Aggregates to realise their impermanence, suffering, and not-self nature. Further, it is the same Five Aggregates of Clinging that should be thoroughly attended to by a Stream-Winner, as impermanent, suffering and not-self. Developing from the stage of a Stream-Winner, a meditator moves on to Once-returning. The Once-Returner meditates on the same Five Aggregates of Clinging. He then becomes a Non-Returner. The Non-Returner meditates on the same Five Aggregates again. Now he becomes an Arahant (a Noble One). The Arahant too meditates on the Five Aggregates. From this it is clear that the Five Aggregates are the things one has to meditate on even when one has become an Arahant.

CLINGING ARISES THROUGH THE SIX SENSE-DOORS

Those who are not trained in Vipassana perceive themselves and others as having the nature of being permanent, as having existed before, as existing now, as going to exist in future, as existing always. They perceive themselves as endowed eternally with happiness, goodness and beauty. Further, they perceive that it is a 'self' within them that empowers seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking. With constant and habitual thinking and imagining through many life times, human beings have been inculcated to conceive that the 'self' or 'I' have existed before and is constantly thinking and imagining. The 'self' or 'I' that had existed before is now continuing 'thinking' and 'imagining'. Hence, arises the conception that the 'I' or the 'self' is a permanent entity. They also conceive that 'thinking' or 'imagining' as being pleasant and enjoyable.

Therefore, when one believes that 'thinking' is happiness and when told that the 'thinking' will disappear, one does not accept this truth. One is not pleased; this is because one clings to the concept that 'thinking' is happiness and goodness. In this way one clings to whatever comes through the six-sense doors, as being 'permanent', as being 'happy', as an 'ego', as a 'self'. One delights with craving and clings to it. One is ignorant of the truth and clings to erroneous views.

To correct these views, when one meditates, one then contemplates on the Five Aggregates to realise their clinging or grasping nature; that these Aggregates are inconsistent, constantly operating in a flux; and because of this characteristic, such Aggregates are a source of unhappiness and unsatisfactoriness; and one then realises that there is not a so called "soul" or any empowering, individual entity within, that can discipline and orchestrate thoughts, speech and deeds. ***Clinging, grasping or attachments are the result of wrong views in regards to our concept of ourselves in relation to our way of life; they are the cause of our continual rebirths in the rounds of samsara.*** The only way out of this universal delusion is to practise Vipassana Mindfulness Meditation, and by such mindfulness meditation we are able to put an end to suffering and further rebirths in samsara. ***Without thorough insight knowledge we cling to things the moment we see them, hear them, smell them, taste them, feel them and think of them; hence, when we see someone, we believe that what we see is a person, an ego, we cling to this view*** (that is to say whenever we are aware of phenomena arising through our six sense doors).

We think of ourselves as well as of others as having an "empowering ego" within us that lives and controls all that we think, speak and perform. In reality, lives are not lived independently; life is only mind and matter rising conditionally one after another in an unending process, even through to existences after this.

Throughout many existences in samsara, living beings have mistakenly viewed mind and matter, as "an independent personage", "an ego", duly endowed with powers to think, speak and see for itself; and they, by age old habits and delusion, cling to this perception.

Vipassana, insight wisdom, allows us to see the reality of rising mental and physical phenomenon. Once we realise the reality of rising and falling mental and physical phenomena; that they are transient, a process in a flux of inconsistencies; a source of dissatisfaction and unhappiness; and arising through conditions, not governed by "ourselves", we do not cling to them.

MIND AND MATTER ARE IMPERMANENT

Mind and Matter rise and pass away; in your meditation and contemplation you will see them as they really are; impermanent and a source of suffering, without any empowering self within. ***Mind and Matter, arising and passing away are but Processes lacking in a Personality, a Soul or a Self.***

In your meditation, you will observe by direct experience that there is "no personality", "no soul", and "no self"; just a process, arising and passing away. Hence, you experience things directly as they really are. When you see, hear, touch or perceive, you will see the Mental and Material Processes that rise through the six sense-doors as they really are. ***When you see, the seeing is real. Then you note 'seeing; seeing'. In the same way, when you hear, note 'hearing'; when you smell, note 'smelling'; when you taste, note 'tasting'; when you touch, note 'touching'.*** Tiredness, body heat, aches and such unbearable and unpleasant sensations arise, from contact too. Note them; 'tiredness, hot, pain'. As thoughts, ideas arise, note them; 'thinking, imagining, pleasure, delight', as they arise in your consciousness. Initially, the student should proceed with noting as well as he can, as he will find it difficult to be aware and note all that come up through the six sense-doors while his concentration is not well developed.

The practice in Vipassana meditation is to be aware, observe and note the rising and falling of the abdomen. Observing the movement of rising, you note; 'rising'; observing the movement of falling, you note 'falling'. ***These movements are the real moments and we are observing and noting the rising and falling as it really happens; not before or after, but exactly at the moment it is real and happening. This is reality. The rising is real, the falling is real, and the moving air element is real.*** In reality, the rising-falling characterises the air element. If you observe the abdomen attentively as it rises and falls, the firmness is there, the motion is there, and the bringing out is there. Here, the 'firmness' is the characteristic of the air element, the motion is its property, and the bringing out is its manifestation. To know the air element as it really is means to know its characteristic, property and manifestation. ***Vipassana meditation allows us to realise the reality of the aggregates, giving rise to insight knowledge, which begins with the defining of mind and matter.*** One has to understand the air element by way of its characteristics, the function and manifestation. The air element has the characteristic of support. In a football it is air that fills and supports, so that the ball expands and remains firm as the air element is in support.

The Blessed One taught that one should be mindful of the form walking by noting 'walking, walking', every time one walks. How knowledge is developed from meditating is explained. ***When he walks, he is aware; 'I am walking'; the thought I am walking arises. This produces air. The air triggers the movements. The bringing forward of the whole body as the air element spreads is said to be walking.*** The meditator who is practising walking meditating, notes thus; 'walking, walking', every time he walks. Firstly, the intention 'I will walk' arises. This intention gives rise to tense movement all over the body, which in turn causes the material body to move forward movement by movement. Generally, it is said: 'I walk' or 'He walks' In reality there is no "I" or "He" that walks. The meditator realises that there is only the Intention to walk and the Material Form moves in walking.

When one stretches one's arm, one feels stiffness being initiated there. It is the air element in support. In the same way when one presses an air-pillow or mattress with one's body or head, one's body or head will not come down but stay high above. It is because the air element in the pillow is providing the support. Bricks pile up as the ones below support those above.

If the bricks below are not supporting, the ones above will tumble down. In the same way the human body is maintained in its firm condition; standing, walking or sitting by the air element. The function of the air element is moving. It moves from place to place when it is strong. It is the air element that makes the body bend, stretch, sit, rise, go or come.

It may be construed that when one notes 'bending, stretching', as the case may be only concepts like arms will appear in the mind. Further when one notes 'left, right' as one walks, only concepts like legs will appear in the mind, and if one notes 'rising, falling', only concepts like the abdomen will appear in the mind. ***Concepts and realities will arise simultaneously at the early stages. Therefore, both, concepts and realities will appear to the beginner in the initial phase of practice.*** It will be difficult and impracticable to separate them at the beginning of the training. However, as the student advances in his insight realisation, concepts and realities will be strictly defined and concepts will not arise.

The Blessed One himself did not solely apply realities in His Teachings when He taught 'I am walking, etc.,' when we walk, bend or stretch, He made use of conventional concepts as He realises that there will be those who cannot see realities as such and not seeing it as such, they will be confused. ***Although one meditates applying the language of concepts like 'walking, bending, stretching'; as one's mindfulness and concentration become stronger, All Concepts will disappear and only the Realities like Support and Movements will appear to the meditator.***

When one attains to the stage of the ***Knowledge of Dissolution*** (refer to Book V), and although one notes, 'walking, walking', based on conventional language, neither the legs nor the body will appear in the mind; only the movements are there. Although noting 'bending, bending', there will not be forms of arms or legs; only the movements. Although noting, 'rising, falling', there will not be images of the abdomen or the body; only the movements out and in. These as well as swaying are functions of the air element.

What appears to be bringing out or drawing in to the meditator's mind is the manifestation of the air element. When bending or stretching the arm, it appears something is drawing it in or pushing it out. It is plainer when walking.

To the meditator whose concentration has grown sharper by noting 'walking, right step, left step, lifting, putting forward, putting down', this moving forward as if being driven from behind becomes quite plain. The legs seem to be pushing forward of their own accord. How they move forward without the meditator making any effort is very plain. So, when one meditates, one will know the air element by way of its characteristic of supporting, its function of moving, and its manifestation of bringing out; this is right knowledge. Even so, this knowledge of the characteristics is not a prerequisite to begin practising meditation; one need not learn them as this insight will arise in the course of the practice.

When one sees a flash of lightning, this bright flash is the characteristic of lightning. As lightning flashes, darkness is dispelled; this is the function of lightning, its work. One also sees what it is like; whether it is long, short, a curve, a circle, straight, or vast. One sees its characteristic, its function, and its manifestation, all at once. Only thing is one may not be able to say the brightness is its characteristic, dispelling of darkness is its function, or its shape or outline is its manifestation; however, one sees them all the same.

In like manner, one will know about the air element; one need not learn about them, as what we learn are not realities, they are only concepts, from hearsay and literature. The meditator who is contemplating the rising mind and matter knows them as if he were touching them. He knows the firmness or laxity thereof; its characteristic. He knows the moving in or out; its function. He also knows its bringing in and pushing out; its manifestation. These are the reality he knows directly.

When one meditates; 'right step, left step', one knows the tenseness in every step; its characteristic. One knows the moving about; its function. One knows its bringing out; its manifestation. These are proper knowledge; the right knowledge. To know for oneself how one can discern the characteristic and so on by meditating on what arises, one must practise as follows:

When one sits down and meditates, one will certainly have some bodily heat, pain, tiredness or ache, somewhere in the body; these are unpleasant feelings. When one mindfully notes; 'hot, hot', or 'pain, pain'; one will realise that one is going through an unpleasant experience and suffering. This is the characteristic of suffering; going through an unpleasant experience.

When one is very tired, one may not be able to move. This depressing of the mind is the function of unpleasant feeling. When the mind is depressed, its concomitants are also depressed and in low spirits (Concomittants are the qualities associated with the arising of consciousness in the mind; mind only knows the object, it therefore needs accompanying descriptive factors to qualify the character of the mind in its arising). The manifestation of unpleasant feeling is physical distress. It manifests itself as a physical affliction, an unbearable discomfort, to the meditator's mind. As he meditates and notes; 'hot, hot, pain, pain'; it appears to him as something oppressing in the body, something very hard to bear. It shows up so much that he may even groan. If one meditates and note on the unpleasant feeling in the body as it rises, one knows; the undergoing of undesirable tangible object; its characteristic; the waning of associated states; its function, and the physical affliction; its manifestation. This is the way Vipassana meditators acquire insight knowledge.

THE MIND

Mind has the intrinsic nature of going to the object, cognising the object. This is the characteristic of mind; the ability to cognise. Mind cognises, imagines and thinks; note 'thinking, imagining, pondering', as and when such phenomena arise. If an idea comes up while you are meditating 'rising, falling', etc., you have to note the idea. If you can note it the moment it appears, it disappears immediately. If you can't, several of its followers (concomittants) like delight, desire, will come in succession. If you note consciousness whenever it rises, you see very clearly how it is going to this object, now going to that object. As you note rising, falling, etc., the mind sometimes wanders away. You note it and it disappears. Then another consciousness comes up. You note it and it disappears. Again another consciousness appears. Again you note it and again it disappears. Again another comes up. You have to note these rising and falling phenomena. Then the meditator comes to realise that 'Consciousness is a succession of events that rises and falls away, one after another. When one disappears, another appears'. The continuous manifestation of consciousness is realised. The meditator who realises this also realises death and birth: ***"Death is similar to the passing away of the consciousness just noted, and it is inevitable that the following process in the same stream is birth. Death and birth is but a process that is ongoing. One can then understand the characteristic, function and manifestation of things even though one has not learnt about them; one needs only to meditate and contemplate on them, as they arise".***

The same is true of all the other mental and material qualities. The beginner in meditation can meditate on and understand the mental-material aggregate of clinging only by way of these characteristics, function and manifestation. At the initial stage with the **Analytical Knowledge of Mind and Matter** and the **Knowledge by Discerning Conditionality**, which are elemental in insight meditation; understanding that much is enough (see Book V).

PURPOSE OF MEDITATION

Vipassana is to do away with clinging, attachment and grasping. It is to eradicate defilement from the mind. People not practised in Vipassana tend to view the arising phenomenon of mind and matter, as joyful and as something belonging to an 'I', that exert control over their thoughts, speech and deeds; and they are pleased with them. It is a way to rid ourselves from these clingings; to be free from them. This is the one and only goal of insight meditation. Vipassana insight meditation is a twin pronged practice; practical and inferential. The knowledge you gain by meditating on what actually arises by way of characteristics, function and manifestation is practical insight. From this practical knowledge you infer the impermanence, suffering and non-self nature of things past and future, things you have not experienced. This is inferential insight. 'The object seen' is practical insight; 'going after the object seen, determining both; in the past, in the future', is inferential insight. Note that inferential insight can only be possible following on from experiential practice, no inference can be made without first realising the present. Hence: "Seeing the impermanence of even one formation, one draws the conclusion as regards the others, as 'impermanent are all the things of life'."

Phenomena past or future are not dependable as meditation objects as contemplating on them do not give rise to understanding their real nature. Not understanding them, we will not be able to know things as they really are. Things of the more recent past may be recalled; and, as we recall them, we think, 'I' saw, 'I' heard, 'I' thought. It was 'I' (an entity) who saw at that time and it is still the same 'I' (same entity) who, is seeing now." Hence, there is the 'I' concept for us. There can even be concepts of permanence and happiness. As such, recalling things in the past to meditate on do not serve our purpose. We will cling to them and this clinging is difficult to overcome. Although we look on them as mind and matter with all our learning and thinking, the 'I' concept persists, because we have clinging attachment to them.

We say 'impermanent' on the one hand, but we conceptualise 'permanency' on the other. We note suffering, but the notion 'happiness' keeps turning up. We meditate on 'non-self', but the 'self' image remains strong and firm. Our meditation may give way to preconceived ideas. Things of indefinite time are illusionary and are not in existent; they are basically imaginations, thoughts and delusions; concepts of names, signs and shapes.

ORIGINATION OF DEFILEMENT

Presently arising phenomena from the six sense doors are the realities of our present moment; they are real and in their initial moment of arising they have not defiled the mind as yet. They are presently arising; as they arise in the present moment, they are like brand new, unsoiled cloth or paper.

Being not mindful, one fails to note arising phenomena, clinging arises; one's mind is defiled; this defiling process is irreversible. When one is mindful and diligent to note arising phenomena, clinging does not occur; one's mind will not be defiled. This is the reason why mindfulness is of great importance. There is clinging with craving; clinging of sense-desires; there is clinging with wrong view; clinging of wrong views, of mere rite and ritual; of the self. Hence: ***"Conditioned by clinging is becoming; conditioned by becoming is birth; conditioned by birth, old age and dying; grief, suffering, sorrow, despair and lamentation come into being. Thus, comes to be the origination of this entire mass of ill."***

Clinging, grasping and or attachment is no small matter. It is the root-cause of all deeds, good or bad. One who clings to or who has grasped at mental or physical phenomena, works to accomplish what he believes are good things. All living things do what they do because they think it is good and beneficial for him do so. When one thinks something is good, one becomes attached to it, and one tends to cling to it, regardless of the correctness or otherwise of that attachment. A thief steals, a robber robs people because they think it is beneficial to them to steal and rob. So does a killer kills, because he thinks it is beneficial to him to kill.

NOTE DILIGENTLY AND MINDFULLY RIGHT NOW

If we fail to diligently and mindfully note rising phenomena, we will not be able to know their real nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self; in which circumstance, there are good possibilities that we may relive them, which will cause defilement to arise in us. ***Defilement are latent in whatever we see, hear, taste, smell, feel and think.*** When you diligently and mindfully note arising phenomenon during meditation, you will realise that when you note what you see, it passes away; what you hear and you note; it passes away. They pass away in no time at all. Now that you see them as they really are, there is nothing to love, nothing to hate, nothing to cling to. If there is nothing to cling to, there can be no clinging, attachment or grasping. ***Only when you are aware of and note arising phenomena, clinging and grasping will not arise. When you note as soon as the eye-door process ends and before the subsequent mind-door process begins clinging will not arise.*** When diligently and mindfully noting 'seeing', 'hearing', 'touching' or 'perceiving', arising consciousness will not bring about clinging. ***The meditator who notes on whatever arises as it arises sees directly how everything arises and passes away, and it becomes clear to him that all things are Impermanent, Suffering is in their nature and there is no powerful, Controlling Entity within a living being; all things are without a Self. He knows this for himself; not because a teacher has explained it to him. This only is the real knowledge.***

DEDICATED EFFORT

To arrive at the above stage of knowledge needs dedicated effort and firm faith (two of the five factors to be developed), without laxity of purpose. However, there is no surety that the meditator will succeed at one sitting. In any case he must diligently and mindfully note all phenomena arising from the six sense doors, even though it may not be possible to note everything initially. He should begin noting several or as much as he can. It is easy to observe the moving form in the rising and falling of the abdomen. Note without a let-up; 'rising, falling; rising, falling'. To enhance mindfulness and concentration in the early stage, sitting and touching points should also be noted; 'rising, falling, sitting, touching'; as noting continues, ideas may come up; note them too; 'thinking, planning, knowing'. These are hindrances, and unless they are gotten rid of, they will cloud your realisation of mind and matter phenomena. ***Do not dwell on them. Note them and observe their disappearance.***

If unbearable feelings like tiredness, body temperature, pain, or itch, appear in the body, be aware of their arising and note: 'tired, tired' or 'hot, hot', as they arise. If desire arises to stretch or bend the limbs, note it too, 'desire to bend, desire to stretch'. When you bend or stretch, every move should be noted: 'bending, stretching; bending, stretching'. In the same way, when you rise from your sitting posture, note every move. When you walk, note every step. When you sit down, note it. If you lie down, note it too. ***Every physical movement made, every thought that arises, every feeling that comes up; all must be diligently and mindfully noted.*** In all cases, as in during a period of mental quieness, if there is nothing in particular to note, revert to noting 'rising, falling, sitting, touching'. If there are things you see or hear particularly, note them too. Except for the four, five, or six hours you sleep, you keep noting things. If you keep on noting in earnest, you will, in two or three days, find your mindfulness and concentration quite strong; if not in two or three days, then in five or six days. Then very rarely do wandering thoughts come up. If they do, you are able to note them the moment they come. And they pass away the moment you note them. The object noted like the rising and falling and the mind noting it seem to be well-timed, and your noting is generally easy and sharp. These are signs that your mindfulness and concentration have become strong; that you have developed purity of mind.

CONTEMPLATION ON IMPERMANENCE

By diligent and correct practice, the meditator will gain a deeper and more profound Vipassana knowledge; a clear purified mind will be the immediate result. At this advanced stage the meditator will realise distinctly and clearly without doubt that every time he notes, the object noted and the mind that notes it are two separate phenomena. ***He comes to know that Material Form is One and The Mental State that notes it, is Another.*** To the non-Vipassana person, the Material Form and the Mind that cognises are one and the same thing; however, the Vipassana meditator, whose mindfulness and concentration are well developed; realises that the object of attention and the awareness of it are as separate as the wall and the stone that is thrown at it. When he notes 'rising', he realises that 'rising' is one thing, the awareness of it is another thing; only these two exist. When he notes 'falling', 'falling' is one, 'awareness' is another; only these two. The knowledge comes clear to him of its own accord. When he lifts one foot in walking; lifting is one, awareness is another; only these two exist. When he pushes the leg forward; the pushing and the awareness, only these two exist.

Through inference of this direct knowledge, all other things too are impermanent in that **they disappear after becoming**. It must be clear that this knowledge comes to a meditator not through books or from teachers; but that he knows this knowledge by his own contemplation. This is real knowledge. To believe what other people say is faith. To remember out of faith is learning. Insight knowledge comes from one's own personal experience.

That the Five Aggregates are impermanent must be realised by oneself. Realising this, one would further come to know that the Five Aggregates are of a suffering nature, all are conditional and all do not possess an individual self. On continuing practice and further contemplation on mind and matter, the initial stages of insight; **Analytical Knowledge of Mind and Matter** and the **Knowledge of Discerning Conditionality** will mature and be realised by the meditator. ***He realises Mind and Matter are Impermanent because they come to be and then pass away. If a thing never comes to be, it cannot be said to be impermanent.***

Concepts never come to be, never really exist. Take a personal name. It comes into use from the day a child is named. It appears as though it has come to be. It has never come to be, it never really exists. Concepts, names, are just conventions. They never exist. They have never been and they will never be. They never arise, so we can't say they 'pass away'. Nor can we say they are impermanent. Every concept is like that; not in existence, not becoming, not passing away; thus, not impermanent. Mind and matter never were in the beginning. They come into being whenever there arise causes (birth is the cause of mind and matter arising). After coming into being they pass away. The realities of mind and matter are impermanent (death is the ending of mind and matter).

As in the case of seeing; in the beginning there is no seeing, however if the eye is good, an object comes up and there is light, your attention will be drawn to it. Therefore, when these four causes coincide, there is seeing. Once seeing has arisen, it passes away. No more of it. So seeing is impermanent. It is not very easy for a non-Vipassana practitioner to know that seeing is impermanent. Hearing is easier to understand. Initially, hearing is not in existence; however, the ear being efficient and the source of sound arises and there is no barrier, attention will be drawn to the sound; when these four factors coincide, then there is hearing. It arises and passes away; no more of it, hence hearing is impermanent.

You hear talking; you hear one sound after another. Once you have heard them, they are gone. When something is said; you hear it, then it is no more. They arise and they pass away. It is the same with other psycho-physical phenomena; they come and they go. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking, bending, stretching, moving; all come and pass away. Because they keep passing away, we say they are impermanent. Of these, the passing away of consciousness is very clear. If your mind wanders while you are noting 'rising, falling'; you note 'wandering'. As it is being noted, the wandering mind is no more. It has not existed before. It comes about just then. It is gone when noted. Hence it is impermanent. The passing away of unpleasant feelings, too, is obvious. As you go on noting 'rising, falling, tiredness, hot, or pain', sometimes it disappears at least for the time you are noting. So it is impermanent. The meditator realises its impermanent characteristic as he notes its arising and passing away. ***This realisation of the fleeting nature of things is contemplation of impermanence. It comes from your own experience. Mere reflection without personal experience is not true knowledge.***

Without meditating and noting arising phenomena, you will not know directly what come up and pass away. If you had learnt it from books, it is just book knowledge, but not intrinsic insight knowledge known by your own direct experience. Intrinsic insight knowledge is what you know for yourself by meditating and contemplating on things as they arise and pass away. ***As your concentration sharpens, you will be able to see a great number of thoughts in one single act of bending or stretching of the limbs. You will observe large numbers of thoughts coming up one after another as you intend to bend and stretch or perform other physical functions.*** There will arise a great number of thoughts in the twinkling of an eye. Great numbers of thoughts will also arise when you walk. You have to note all these fleeting thoughts as they arise. If you cannot label them, just note 'aware, aware'. You will see that there are four, five, or ten thoughts arising in succession every time you note 'aware'. Sometimes when the awareness is so swift, even the word 'aware' is no longer necessary; just observe their passing away. ***A thought arises, the mind is aware of it; another thought arises, the observant consciousness is aware of it.***

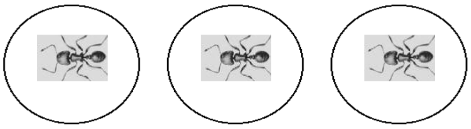
For every thought that arises there is the observing and diligent mind that is aware of it. Being mindful, arising and passing away of phenomena are very clear to the meditator. The wandering mind that arises as you are noting the rising and falling of the abdomen is caught by the observing consciousness as quickly and as sharply as a well aimed arrow that flies directly into the target. When you are aware of it, it is gone. You observed it as clearly as if you were holding it in the palm of your hands.

When tiredness arises, you note 'tired', and it is gone. It comes up again, you note it again, and it is gone again. This kind of passing away will be made all the more clearer in advanced insight. 'Tired', noted, gone; 'tired', noted, gone; they pass away one by one. There is no connection between one tiredness and the next. Similarly with pain; 'pain', noted, gone; 'pain', noted, gone; each pain is gone at each noting. One pain does not mix with the other. Each pain is distinctly separate from the other. To ordinary people there is no interruption in tiredness or pain. It seems to tire or pain continuously for a long time. In fact, tiredness or pain is not continuous. One unit of tiredness and the next, one unit of pain and the next, just very short, very separate units of tiredness or pain. The meditator sees this as he notes.

When 'rising' of the abdomen is noted, the rising comes up gradually and passes away by degrees. When 'falling' of the abdomen is noted, the falling comes up and passes away by degrees. Generally, people perceive the rising and falling in terms of the abdominal shape. So perceiving, they will only be seeing the abdominal shape. Therefore, they only perceive the material element moving; they do not understand as taught by the Blessed One that realities like mind and matter do not move from place to place. In another example, whenever the hand moves, they think it is the same hand that moves, they think the same hand moves inwards and outwards. To them it is an ever-unchanging hand. ***It is because they fail to see through to the reality of arising and breaking up of matter, the way matter rises and disappears in succession.*** It is because they lack the knowledge to see through to the reality that the fact of **impermanence is hidden by continuity.** It is hidden because one does not note on what arises and passes away. Since the meditator is watching every arising, all things mental and material appear to him as separate, broken pieces; not as things whole and unbroken.

From afar ants look like a line, but nearer you see the ants one by one.***

(normal view of arising phenomena)



(a Vipassana practitioner view of arising phenomena)

The Vipassana practitioner sees things in broken pieces (or in separate individual frame) so continuity cannot hide the fact from him. The characteristic of impermanence unfolds itself to him. He is no longer deluded. ***When it is realised through experience that life is but made up of things that rise and pass away incessantly, there will not be any inclination to clinging to a self.*** When impermanence is realised, suffering is too. The meditator who realises how things are rising and passing away, can also see how the two events, rising and passing away, have been the source of dissatisfaction. When the characteristic of impermanence is seen, the characteristic of suffering is seen too. Hence, it is imperative to contemplate and realise the one characteristic of impermanence.

REFLECTIONS AND PROGRESS IN THE PRACTICE

When Insight Knowledge has advanced, you will be able to see things in their true light; that all things are of an Impermanent, Suffering and Non-self nature; this knowledge can only be achieved through Vipassana. When you realise these Three Universal Characteristics of existence, you will understand their true nature.

All forms of phenomena including mind and matter, appear and disappear; you can derive no pleasure from them; they can never be a refuge; they can perish at any moment; they are frightening and they are a source of suffering. Almost all people will have the belief that: "This body will not perish so soon. It will last for quite a long time." So they take the body to be a dependable refuge; but now as those who meditate note they find only incessant rising and passing away. They see that all things, physical and mental, passing away as they note them.

If no new ones arise for the mental and material things that have passed away, death ensues; and frighteningly, the truth strikes home that this can happen at any moment without notice or by your leave! To believe that there is an individual 'self' in these mental and material things which are also subject to death at any moment and to take refuge in such a 'self' is as deluded as taking refuge in an old tumble-down house. Further, they realise that nothing happens as they desire. Things just follow their natural course. They thought they could move if they wished to, sit if they wished to, rise, see, hear or do anything if they wished to. Now as they meditate and note, they realise that what they have been taught, believed in and taken for granted as the realities of their existence all their lives was in fact a great delusion founded on totally unsound reasoning.

They now realise that Mind and Matter work as a pair; only when there is intention to bend is there the material form bending! Only when there is intention to stretch is there the material form stretching. There is effect only when there is cause. Only when there is something to see do they see. If there is something to see, they can't help seeing it. They hear when there is something to hear. They feel happy only when there is reason to be happy. They worry when there is cause to worry. If there is cause, there is effect. They cannot help it. There is no entity that lives and does what it desires. There is no self, no ego, no I. Only processes of arising and passing away. To Have Clear Understanding Is The Most Important Thing In Insight Meditation.

Meditators will experience joys, tranquilities, and bright lights in the course of their practice; these are not important things. ***What is important is to have direct realisation of impermanence, suffering and not-self. These characteristics are clear to meditators as meditation progresses.***

When meditators' practice has evolved to deeper stages of insight wisdom, they will have no obsession with the object noted; when this happens, clinging does not arise. In their noting of arising phenomena from the six sense doors, there is no clinging to what they see, hear, smell, eat, touch or be aware of. These phenomena appear to rise each in its time and then pass away.

Meditators will have realised that all rising mental and physical phenomena are impermanent; therefore, there is nothing to cling to. They will also realise that all arising mental and physical phenomena cause suffering with their rise and fall. There is nothing to cling to as happy, good, or beautiful. They rise and fall as is their nature, so there is nothing to cling to as self, soul, or that the "I" have lived and lasted. All these knowledge will be gradually realised by meditators directly. ***"The stopping of clinging is from the stopping of craving: the stopping of becoming is from the stopping of clinging; the stopping of birth is from the stopping of becoming; from the stopping of birth, old age and dying; grief, suffering, sorrow, despair, and lamentation are stopped. Thus comes to be the stopping of this entire mass of ill."*** – M. i. 337; S. ii. 1-3

One who notes on the mental and material objects that appear at the six sense-doors and knows their intrinsic nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self does not delight in them or cling to them. ***As he does not cling to them, he makes no effort to enjoy them; as he does not make an effort, there arises no kamma; as no kamma arises, there is no new birth. When there is no new birth, there is no occasion for old age, dying, grief, etc. This is how one realises momentary Nibbana through insight path whenever one notes.***

GATHERING WISDOM TOWARDS THE PATH

To reach the Noble Path the meditator has to practise diligently to realise Insight Path as an initial prerequisite; and Insight Path begins with attaining to the Analytical Knowledge of Mind and Matter. From there, he continues with the practice till he arrives at the Knowledge by Discerning Conditionality. Then, noting diligently, he gains the Knowledge of Investigation. Here he comes to enjoy reflecting on things, investigating them, often spending some time in doing so. If he is not reflecting or contemplating, he should continue meditating.

His awareness now becomes light and swift. He will see very clearly how the things noted arise and pass away. At this juncture, he will have come to the **Knowledge of Rising and Passing Away.**

At this stage noting tends to be easy. Illuminations, joys, tranquilities appear. Going through experiences not even thought of before, he is thrilled with joy and happiness. At this preliminary stage of insight wisdom, the meditator has to take great pains not to let the mind wander this way and that; as, should it do so, he will not be able to note arising phenomena well. At this stage, nothing seems right; more energetic efforts are needed to overcome hindrances. But with strong faith in his teachers, good intentions and determination, he will pass through all these difficult stages. He would have attained to the **Knowledge of Rising and Passing Away.**

Passing through this stage, everything is fine. Now, noting is easy and effortless. It is good to note, and brilliant lights appear. Rapture seizes him and causes ripples of joy in him. Both body and mind are at ease and he feels very comfortable. The objects to be noted seem to drop onto his mindfulness of their own accord. Mindfulness on its part seems to drop on the object of its own accord. Everything there is noted with ease. One never fails or forgets to note. On every noting the awareness of what is noted is very clear. If he attends to something and reflects on it, it proves to be a plain and simple matter. If he contemplates on impermanence, suffering and not-self, they turn out to be plainly discernible things. The meditator then feels like spreading the Dhamma and believes he would make a very good teacher. He wants to teach and he tends to be vocal.

Practising meditation is in a way similar to climbing a mountain. The meditator begins climbing from the base, and soon he gets tired. He enquires of those who are coming down and they answer with encouraging words like, "It's nearer now." Tired, he climbs on and very soon comes to a resting place in the shade of a tree with a cool breeze blowing in. All his tiredness is gone. The beautiful scenery around fascinates him. He is refreshed to climb on. In this analogy, the **Knowledge of Rising and Passing Away** is the resting place for his climb to higher insight knowledge. He continues meditating and noting. Then, as he progresses, material forms and features no longer manifest themselves and he finds them always disappearing.

Whatever appears; disappears the moment he notes it. He notes seeing, it disappears swiftly; he notes hearing, it disappears; bending, stretching, again they disappear swiftly. Not only do the object that comes up disappears, the awareness of it too disappears with it in a pair-wise sequence. This is attaining to the ***Knowledge of Dissolution.***

Every time he notes arising phenomena, they dissolve swiftly. Having witnessed this for a long time, he develops fear of them. This is the ***Knowledge of Fearfulness***. Then he finds fault with these things that keep passing away. He is at the stage of ***Knowledge of Tribulation.*** Then as he notes on, he becomes wearied of them. This is the ***Knowledge of Repulsion.***

Sitting or standing, going or coming, bending or stretching, speaking or working; everything had seemed very nice. The meditator had always believed that his material body is dependable and a delightful thing. Now, he realises that Mind and Matter has the tendency to rise and fall away and be terminated at any moment; he therefore, no longer sees the body as dependable or delightful; he sees it as something undesirable and repugnant. He has enjoyed pleasurable feelings of materiality and mentality; "I am enjoying, I feel happy." Now these feelings are no longer pleasurable; they pass away as he notes them. He becomes wearied of them.

The meditator had thought well of his perception of materiality and mentality, but now this perception too passes away as he notes them. He feels disgusted with it as well. Volitional activities are responsible for all his physical, mental and vocal behaviour. To think; "I sit, I rise, I go, I act", is to cling to volitional activities. He have thought well of them, too, now that he sees them passing away, he feels repulsion towards them. In the matter of the sense organs too; whatever phenomenon that arises at the six sense doors is now a thing of disgust, to be wearied of. He has a sense of disgust in their arising and passing away; extreme disgust in their instability and inconsistency. Then arise the desire to be rid of them: "They come and pass away incessantly; they are worthless; they should all ceased." With this insight, the meditator has arrived at the ***Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance. His thoughts now turn to Nibbana; he reviews and reflects on his present faculties and assesses their maturity. He reviews each faculty; Faith, Exertion, Mindfulness, Concentration and Insight Wisdom. He seeks to develop their balance and enhance their development.***

With confidence in his well developed faculties, he then aspires to practise with increased vigour and diligence. He continues with his meditation with improved mindfulness and diligence. This is the ***Knowledge of Reflection.*** Working with such increased effort; his realisation of the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self becomes all the more profound and all encompassing to his mind. Especially pervasive is the realisation of suffering. After the stage of reflection he comes to the ***Knowledge of Indifference to Material Formations. Now the meditator is quite at ease. Without much effort on his part, notings run smoothly. He sits down to note and makes the initial effort. Then everything runs its course, smooth like clock-work. For an hour or so he makes no change in his posture and goes on with meditation and contemplation without interruption. Before this knowledge there may have been disturbances; his mind may be directed to a sound heard and which had hindered him; thoughts may have wandered. Painful feelings like tiredness, bodily heat, aches, itches, coughs, appear and obstructed his practice; he has to begin all over. But now all goes well. There are no more disturbances. Sounds are heard and noted and whatever arises from the six sense doors are noted without much effort.***

There are no more wanderings of the mind. Pleasant objects may turn up but no delight or pleasure arises in the meditator. He may be faced with unpleasant objects; he feels neither displeasure nor fear. Painful feelings like tiredness, bodily heat or aches rarely appear. If they do, they are not unbearable. The meditator's noting improves further and becomes easier. Itching, pains and coughs disappear once this stage of knowledge is attained. Some are even cured of serious illnesses. Even if the illnesses are not completely cured, meditator gets some relief while noting in earnest. Even for an hour or for longer periods there will be no interruption to his noting; he feels no weariness in the body.

Time passes unheeded. He has no intention to stop meditating and noting and while others are finding difficulties under challenging conditions, such as extreme heat; the meditator who is working in earnest with this ***Knowledge of Indifference to Material Formations will not be hindered by the conditions at all. The whole day seems to have passed by.***

However, in this advanced contemplation, and while at this stage of further insight knowledge materialising, there can be dangers like excess of worry, ambition, or attachment. A meditator has to be aware and note them; when these are noted and gotten rid of, further progress will be made and the Noble Path Knowledge will be realised. Whenever one notes; there will not be any accumulation of further defilement, hence, no suffering or unwholesome kamma will arise in respect of the objects noted. All are extinguished. Such cessation of suffering is experienced with every act of noting. Noting is the way to the truth of cessation. At the Noble Path moment you realise the First Stage to Nibbana. Every time you note, right view regarding the true nature of mind and matter arises. Once there is right view its concomitants such as right thought arise too. To practise and realise the Eight Constituents of the Path is to develop the Path. It is how you understand while meditating. At the Noble Path moment the Eight Constituents arise and Nibbana is realised. The one who has arrived at the Path and Fruition can see on reflection how the Noble Path has come to be. Hence, if you understand how mind and matter are cause for sufferings, if you have given up craving which is also the cause of suffering, if you realise the end of suffering, and if you realise the Eight Constituents of the Path in you; you realise the Four Noble Truths. Once you know the Four Noble Truths you know the Noble Dhamma as well.

RECAP OF BASICS

The meditator must be mindful that when he walks, he notes; 'intention to walk'; 'walking, walking', 'lifting, pushing forward, putting down'. As he so walks, mindfulness arises whenever he notes, as does knowledge that cognises the object noted. He knows the intention to walk, the material form of walking, and the awareness of walking arises and pass away. This mindfulness and knowledge that arise whenever he notes constitute Establishing Mindfulness by way of ***Contemplation of the Body***.

He is aware: 'I am feeling a painful feeling'. The meditator notes 'hot, hot' or 'pain, pain', whenever there arise bodily heat or pain. He is mindful and he knows how feelings arise and then pass away. This is Establishing Mindfulness by way of ***Contemplation of Feelings.***

He is aware of a passionate mind that it is passionate. Every time a thought or idea arises, the meditator notes; 'clinging, delighting'. He is thus mindful and knows how they arise and pass away. This is Establishing Mindfulness by way of ***Contemplation of the Mind***.

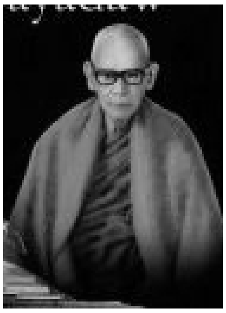
One who has sensual desire is aware: 'There is sensual desire in me'. The meditator notes; 'desire, delight', and so on, and is mindful and knows how dispositions like sensual desire arise and pass away. This is Establishing Mindfulness by way of ***Contemplation of Mental Factors.***

The meditator realises from self-experience. He becomes skillful in the Noble Dhamma, the **Four Establishments of Mindfulness**. At the same time he is making the **Four Supreme Efforts**, too. ***As he notes, he is making effort to discard evils that have arisen, or to prevent the arising of those evils not yet arisen, or to develop those good deeds of insight and Path that have not yet arisen, or to augment the insight knowledge that has already arisen.*** The **Four Means of Accomplishment** are involved too. When he notes, he relies on determination, effort, thought or reason.

The **Five Faculties of Confidence, Effort, Mindfulness, Concentration and Wisdom** are there, too. The Five Powers are the same as the Five Faculties. The **Seven Factors of Enlightenment**, too, are there.

When he notes, he develops **Mindfulness, Investigation** (of The Dhamma), **Effort, Rapture, Quietude, Concentration and Equanimity.** The **Eightfold Path** is involved too. Every time he notes he is walking along this Path. As a traveller nears his destination with each step, he too nears Nibbana with each noting. If the Path-Fruition were to be reached in ten thousand notings, and if he now has a thousand notings, then he would need nine thousand more notings to reach it. If he had made nine thousand notings already then he would need only a thousand more. If he had 9999 already, then the very next noting would be the Path process. The more he notes, the nearer he comes to the Path.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE PRACTICE



The Blessed One taught: A human being, a person iss a conditionally coming together of two Distinct Groups; Mind and Matter. In the practice of Vipassana, we see the reality that the solid substance of a human being is a mass of matter, just like a doll made of clay which is a collection of clay dust.

MATTER (rupa) has an inherent capability of changing its form under physical conditions of heat and cold; it does not possess any faculty of knowing an object.

MIND (nama) on the other hand, has the capability of knowing an object or holding an object, while that of matter neither have an object, holds an object, nor knows an object. 'Mind Knows an Object, While Matter Has no Faculty of Knowing'.

Logs and pillars, bricks and stones, and lumps of earth are a mass of matter; they do not possess any faculty of knowing. It is the same with material elements in a living body; they have no faculty of knowing. The material elements in a dead body are like those of a living body; they are without the faculty of knowing. There is a general misconception, however, that material elements of a living body possess the faculty of knowing an object irrespective of whether it is in a dead or a living body. In reality:

Depending on Matter, Mind comes into being. Mind inclines to an object. The uninitiated often speaks of mind as 'thought' or 'consciousness'. Mind arises depending on Matter. Hence;

Depending on eye, Eye-consciousness (seeing) arises;
Depending on ear, Ear-consciousness (hearing) arises;
Depending on nose, Nose-consciousness (smelling) arises;
Depending on tongue, tongue-consciousness (taste) arises;
Depending on body, body-consciousness (sense of touch) arises.

There are differing states (either pleasant, unpleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant) of the sense of touch. While the sense of touch has a wide field of sensations by arising throughout the whole length of body, even inside and outside the body, the sense of sight, hearing, smell or taste can on the other hand come into being respectively in its own particular sphere, such as eye, ear, nose, and tongue, which occupy a very small and limited part of the body. ***These senses of touch, sight, hearing, smells and taste are elements of mind.*** Also there comes into being mind-consciousness (i.e., thoughts, ideas, imaginations, etc.) depending on mind-base. All of these are elements of mind. As a rule: ***Mind Knows an Object; Matter Does Not.***

People generally believe that, in the case of seeing, it is the eye which actually sees. They think that seeing and eyes are one and the same thing. They also think, "Seeing is I: I see things: eyes, seeing and I are one and the same person." ***In reality this is not so; 'eye' is one thing and 'seeing' another; there is no separate, independent, inner entity, 'I' or 'ego'. There is only the fact of 'seeing' Coming into being Depending on 'eye'.*** It is similar to viewing through a window in a room; the window has no ability to see. It is the viewer who sees, but without the window, the viewer would not be able to see through the walls. Similarly, in the case of seeing there are two separate things of eye and seeing: 'eye' itself is not 'seeing', as 'seeing' cannot be without the eye. Yet there cannot be an act of seeing without the eye. In fact seeing comes into being depending on the eye. It is now evident that in the body there are only two distinctive elements of **matter (eye)** and **mind (seeing)** at every moment of seeing. In addition there is also a third element of matter; **the visual object.**

As such, there are three elements; **eye** and **visual object**; being the material element and the other being **consciousness of seeing,** which is a mental element. **'Eye'** and **'Visual object'**, being material elements do not possess any ability of knowing an object, while **'seeing'** being a mental element can know the visual object and what it looks like. ***It becomes clear that there exist only these two separate elements of matter, 'eye' and 'visual object' and the co-incidence of these two separate elements is 'seeing consciousness', a mind element.*** Practitioners of Vipassana have eradicated the erroneous view that seeing belongs to or is 'self' or 'ego' or 'living entity' or 'person'. They do not view: Seeing is **'I'** or **'I'** am seeing or **'I'** know.

Through ripening of Insight Knowledge they realise that the 'self' Do Not Exist; and what has been perceived as 'self' is in reality a grouping of Matter and Mind. In reality, at the moment of seeing, the things that are in actual existence are the **'eye'** and **'visual object'** of the material group, and **'seeing'** a mental group. ***Only these two phenomena (Matter and Mind) are in actual existence.***

Unfortunately people in general, hold the view that this group of elements (mind and matter) is 'self' or 'ego' or 'living entity'. They consider that 'seeing is I' or 'what is seen is I' or 'I see with my own eyes'. This mistaken view is conceived on the simple act that seeing is empowered by a **'self'**. Most people hold this erroneous concept that there is an independent **'self'** within each human being. As long as one is not free from this erroneous view (sakkaya-ditthi in Pali) of an independent 'self' within each individual, one cannot get away from the risk of falling into the miserable existence of hell, animals or petas in one's future rebirth. Rebirth takes place in any state of existence as the circumstances of one's own deeds (results of kamma) provide.

For this reason the Blessed One specifically impress on us that it is imperative to work diligently for the total removal of this false sense of a 'self' within. Every effort should be made to acquaint oneself with the suffering of the cycle of rebirth and then to strive for an escape from this recurring cycle, and attainment of Nibbana. If an exit from the cycle of rebirth as a whole is not possible for the time being, we should find a way not to be born into the realms of hell, animals, or petas**. *For this to happen, it is necessary to strive for the total removal of the erroneous view that there is a independent, empowering 'self' within. This erroneous view is the root-cause of rebirth into the miserable states*** and can only be eradicated by realising the Holy Path and its Fruition.

To find the way into the Holy Path, we need to perfect the three virtues of: ***Morality*** (sila), ***Concentration*** (samadhi) and ***Wisdom*** (panna).The Blessed One taught that to realise these three virtues, one should practise Vipassana Mindfulness Meditation, which entails noting or observing every act of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking, which are the constituent physical and mental processes of the body. This is the only way to rid ourselves of this erroneous view. When this is totally removed, rebirth into the realms of hell, animals, asuras or petas will not occur.

In this respect the exercise is simply to mindfully observe and note the existing elements in every act of seeing (and arising phenomena from the other five sense doors). It should be noted as 'seeing, seeing', on every act of seeing. ***If not noted as the phenomena arise, basing on this act of seeing (and also arising phenomena at the other five sense doors) there will arise a misconceived view of a separate 'self' within which sees, and that this separate 'self' within is a permanent entity. This view will give rise to personality attachment and craving for sensual desires. That is to say there will arise attachment for the development of the 'self' in us.***

The misconceived view will in turn originate new deeds, the deeds based on incorrect concepts will cause rebirth existences; because of this, the process of rebirth will be set in motion, bringing along attendant suffering. In order that this wrong view be prevented from evolving further after its arising, it is imperative to mindfully note 'seeing, seeing' on every occasion of seeing at the moment seeing consciousness appears. If not noted mindfully, 'seeing' will have the effect of furthering unsound deeds.

Similarly, in the case of hearing; there are only two distinct elements of matter and mind. Hearing Consciousness arises depending on ear. While Ear and Sound are two elements of Matter; Hearing Consciousness is an element of Mind. To know clearly any one of these two kinds of Matter and Mind, note; 'hearing, hearing' on every occasion of hearing. So also 'smelling, smelling' be noted on every occasion of its arising, and 'knowing, knowing' on every occasion of a taste. Similarly, it should be noted in the case of knowing or feeling the sensation or consciousness of touch in the body. Every kind of touch, either agreeable or disagreeable, usually comes in contact with nerve tissue and there arises a touch-consciousness which feels or knows the touch on each occasion.

It will now be seen that at every time of touching; there are Two elements of Matter: Sense-organ and Impression of Touch, and One element of Mind; Touch Consciousness (only these two and no "self" involved). In order to observe the reality of Matter and Mind distinctly, noting has to be carried out.

All activities in movements and in changing, etc., are initiated by mind conditioned by material elements. When the mind (caused by or due to physical conditions) wills to bend, there will arise a series of inward movements of hand or leg; when the mind wills to stretch or move, there will arise a series of outward movements or movements to and fro respectively. They disappear and are non existent after they occur and at the very point of occurrence. It is, therefore, clear that material activities are the predominating factors in these cases. Hence, it is necessary to note these predominating factors. If not, there will arise the misconceived view that these activities originate from an **'I'** within, or **'I'** am bending, or **'I'** am stretching, or **'My'** hands, or **'My'** legs. ***Hence, noting; 'bending, stretching, moving' etc., is being carried out for the purpose of removing the misconceived view that it is a conceptual 'I' that empowers thought, speech and deed; whereas in reality thought, speech and deed are conditionally arising and that there is not a 'Self', an 'I', a 'Soul' or 'An Entity' within the human frame apart from Matter and Mind, that empowers these to be done. In reality each case is a composition of matter and mind while thinking, imagining, etc., are mind-based; bodily (material) parts are matter. In order to be able to notice matter and mind clearly, it should be noted; 'thinking, imagining, etc.,' in each case.***

ADVANCEMENT IN THE PRACTICE
THE IMPORTANCE OF DILIGENT NOTING

After practising in the manner indicated, there will be an improvement in concentration. One will notice that the mind no longer wanders about but that it remains fixed on the object to which it is directed. At the same time the power of noting has considerably improved. ***On every occasion of noting, one is aware of only the Two Processes of Matter and Mind. A dual set of object and mind, with mind making note of the object, Consciousness comes into realisation.***

On furthering the practice of noting the Origination and Dissolution of Mental and Physical phenomena for some time, one contemplates the nature of such Arising and Falling phenomena and observes that nothing remains permanent; all things are in a state of flux. New Mental and Physical Phenomenon originates momentarily: one notes their Origination and immediately one notes their Dissolution.

Immediately another set of Mental or Physical Phenomenon Arises or Originates, which is again noted and one notes their Dissolution. The process of arising and falling away goes on, which clearly shows that nothing is permanent. **One realises that: 'Things are not permanent',** because one notes from one's own experience that they arise and disappears at every time of noting; **things are never consistent**; they change and are not dependable. This is insight into the characteristic of impermanency (aniccanupassana-nana). Then one also realises that arising and falling away is not desirable.

Usually, one experiences many painful sensations in the body; such as tiredness, excessive body temperature, pain, ache, and at the time of noting these sensations one generally feels that this body is a mass of sufferings. ***This is insight into the characteristic of suffering*** (dukkhanupassana-nana). Elements of Matter and Mind occur according to their respective nature and conditioning, and NOT according to one's wish. One realises that they are purely elements; that they are not governable; that they are not person or living entity. ***This is insight into the absence of a self*** (anattanupassana-nana).

On having fully acquired these knowledge of impermanence, suffering, absence of self (anicca, dukkha, anatta), the maturity of spiritual knowledge of the Path and spiritual knowledge of its Fruition (magga nana and phala nana) takes place and realisation of the first stage sotapanna (sotapatti magga-phala) towards being an arahant is achieved. By this realisation, one is freed from the rounds of rebirth in unhappy existence. Everyone should endeavour to achieve this in this present life. ***Vipassana meditation is the training to note, observe and contemplate the successive occurrences of Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, Touching and Thinking as they arise at the Six Sense Doors.*** The incidents arising at the six sense doors occur very swiftly. Seeing seems to occur at the time of hearing; hearing seems to occur at the time of seeing; it seems that both seeing and hearing occur simultaneously. It seems that three or four incidents of seeing, hearing, thinking, and imagining usually occur simultaneously. It is not possible to note which occurs first and which follows next because they occur so swiftly. ***In reality, seeing Does Not occur at the time of hearing and hearing Does Not occur at the time of seeing. Such incidents occur one at a time.***

A beginner will not have sufficient mindfulness, concentration and spiritual knowledge to note all the arising phenomena; therefore, he should note as much as he is aware of. Seeing or hearing occurs only when due attention is given. If one does not pay heed to any sight or sound, one may pass the time mostly without any occasion of seeing or hearing. Smelling occurs rarely. Experience of taste occurs only at the time of eating. In the cases of seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting, the meditator can note them as they occur. However, body impressions are ever present; they usually exist quite distinctly all the time.

During the time that one is sitting, the body impressions of stiffness or the sensation of hardness in this position are distinctly felt. Attention should, therefore, be fixed on the sitting posture and a note made; 'sitting, sitting'. Sitting is an erect posture of the body consisting of a series of physical activities which are induced by the consciousness consisting of a series of mental activities. It is like an inflated rubber ball which maintains its round shape through the resistance of the air inside: so is the posture of sitting, in which the body is kept in an erect posture through the continuous process of physical activities. People generally assume that the body is lifted and kept in the position by means of sinews. This assumption is correct in the ordinary sense because sinews, blood, flesh, and bones are material elements. The element of stiffening which keeps the body in an erect posture belongs to the material group and arises in the sinews, flesh, blood, etc., throughout the body like the air in a rubber ball. At the time of heavy drowsiness one may drop flat, as the supply of new material in the form of stiffening is cut off. The state of mind in heavy drowsiness or sleep is unconsciousness (bhavanga).

During the course of unconsciousness mental activities are absent, and for this reason the body lies flat during sleep or heavy drowsiness. During waking hours, strong and active mental activities are continually arising, and because of these there arises a series of air elements in the form of stiffening. ***In order to know these facts it is essential to note attentively: 'sitting, sitting'.*** This does not necessarily mean that the body impressions of stiffening should be particularly searched and noted. Attention need only be fixed on the whole form of sitting posture, that is, the lower portion in a bending circular form and the upper portion in an erect posture.

The exercise of observing a single object of sitting posture does not require much effort. In such circumstances vigour is less and concentration is in excess, and one would generally feel lazy to carry on the noting as 'sitting, sitting', repeatedly for a considerable time. Laziness generally occurs when concentration is in excess of vigour. This will lead to a state of torpor (thina-midha). Vigour should be exerted, and for this purpose the number of objects for noting should be increased. After noting the sitting posture of the body as 'sitting', the spot where the sense of touch is felt should be noted as 'touching'. The noting should be repeated on these two objects of sitting posture and the place of touching alternately, as 'sitting, touching; sitting, touching; sitting, touching'. The terms noting or observing or contemplating are used here to indicate the **fixing of attention on an object. The exercise is simply to note, observe and contemplate as 'sitting, touching'.** Those who already have experience in the practice of meditation may perhaps find this exercise easy to begin with, but those without any previous experience may find it rather difficult. The more simplified and easy form of exercise for a beginner is to observe or note the form of rising and falling of one's abdomen. A beginner should start with this exercise of noting or observing these movements. It is easy to observe these movements because they are associated with our breathing; they are coarse and prominent and are easily observed.

As in schools where simple lessons are easy to learn so is the case in the practice of Vipassana meditation. A beginner will find it easier to develop concentration and spiritual knowledge with this simple and easy exercise. Initially, the practical exercise in Vipassana meditation is to (mentally) observe, note and contemplate prominent factors in the body. Of the two elements, mind and matter, the mental element is subtle and less prominent while the material element is coarse and more prominent. Therefore, the usual procedure for one who practises Vipassana insight meditation is to begin the exercise by contemplating the material elements. The four primary physical elements of earth, water, heat and air are coarse and more prominent and are suitable objects for contemplation. In the case of rising and falling of the abdomen, the outstanding factor is the air element. The process of stiffening and the movements of abdomen noticed during the contemplation are the functions of this element.

WANDERING MIND

The Blessed One taught that one should be mindful of the activities of walking while walking; of standing, sitting and lying down while standing, sitting, and lying down, respectively. One should also be mindful of other bodily activities as they occur; one should be mindful primarily of the air element in relation to the other three. As a matter of fact, all four elements of dense physical matter are dominant in every action of the body, and it is essential to note any one of these. At the time of sitting, either of the two movements of rising and falling occurs conspicuously at every time of breathing, and a beginning should be made by noting one of these movements.

While thus being occupied with noting rising and falling, there are occasions when the mind wanders about. When concentration is weak it is very difficult to observe the mind. Though it is directed to the movements of rising and falling, the mind will not stay with them but will wander away. ***This wandering mind should not be left alone***. A note should be made; 'wandering, wandering' as soon as the mind wanders away. On noting repeatedly once or twice when the mind stops wandering, then the exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be continued. ***These instructions are to emphasise the necessity to note every mental activity singularly as it arises in the mind.*** This noting of mental activities as they occur is Cittanupassana; Mindfulness of the Mind. People in general, are not aware of the reality of the mind. This ignorance naturally leads them to view mind as a person, a self or a living entity. They have lived with this concept since their birth; they believed that: ***Imagination is 'I'; 'I' am imagining; 'I' am thinking; 'I' am planning; 'I' know, and so forth.*** Most people have lived with the deluded mindset that there exists a living entity (or atta) or self within, which is inherent within them since birth. In reality there does not exist such a living entity within them, but only a continuous process of elements of mind which arises singly at rapid succession. The practice of contemplation is, therefore, being carried out with a view to realising that reality.

MIND OCCURS SINGLY IN RAPID SUCCESSION

Those, who do not perceive that mind occurs singly in rapid succession, believe that there is only a single mind in them that exist in the course of their lives. They do not realise that numerous new minds (thought forms) are always arising at every moment.

They conceive that seeing, hearing, etc., of the past and those of the present belong to one and the same mind, and that three or four acts of seeing, hearing, touching, knowing usually occur simultaneously. These are deluded views. ***In Reality, any arising mental activity, and or any arising thought is the arising of a Single New Mind.*** This can be perceived when practice and concentration has matured. The instances of imagination and planning are clearly perceptible. Imagination disappears as soon as it is noted as 'imagining, imagining', and planning also disappears as soon as it is noted as 'planning, planning'. These instances of arising, noting, and disappearing, occur like a string of beads. ***The preceding mind is not the following mind, each mind is a distinctive separate unit. This insight is directly seen through mindful contemplation. Mind is without form and is indistinguishable; unlike Matter, which has form as in the structure of the body, head, hands and legs. Matter is easily noticed, Mind is not.***

MIND STAYS IN A CAVE

When Vipassana is fairly advanced, the mind's approach to its object is clearly observed and comprehended. It appears as if each is making a direct leap towards its object. ***Mind comes into existence depending on mind-base and the sense doors of the material body***; it is said that mind stays in the cave. Mind can only be known by means of contemplative noting; that is through observing and noting on every occasion mind arises. Through such mindful noting, insight wisdom is realised. The meditator then realises the inherent reality of the mind; he would then be able to eradicate defilement and this will help to avoid being reborn into the suffering planes. It must now be realised that it is important to note the mind at every moment of its arising. As soon as it is noted mind is no more. For instance, by noting once or twice as 'intending, intending' it is found that intention disappears at once. During the time of proceeding with noting, one may feel different sensations and desires; as in the urge to swallow. This urge should be noted as 'urge to swallow' and on noting the process of preparing to swallow, note 'preparing, preparing', and on swallowing as 'swallowing, swallowing', in the order of their arising. The reason for contemplating in this case is as in all similar cases, is that there may be a persisting personal view as **'wanting to swallow'** is **'I'**; **'swallowing'** is also **'I'**. These are deluded concepts. **In reality,** ***The intention 'wanting to swallow' is Mind Consciousness and not I and the act of 'swallowing' is Material Activity and not I. As such, there exists only MIND and MATTER at that time.***

By means of contemplation in this manner the reality of Mind and Matter is realised. So, also in the case of drinking it should be noted as 'wanting' when one wants to drink, as 'bending' on bending the neck (which should be done slowly), as 'looking', on looking and as 'drinking' when drinking. After noting, the primary exercise of observing and noting 'rising, falling' should be continued.

While sitting in meditation for a considerable length of time, there will arise in the body unpleasant feelings of stiffness, warmness and so forth; these sensations should be noted as soon as they occur. Mind should be fixed on the spot and a note made as 'stiff, stiff' on feeling stiff, as 'warm, warm' on feeling warm, as 'painful, painful' on feeling painful, and 'prickly, prickly' on feeling a prickly sensation, and as 'tired, tired' on feeling tired. These unpleasant feelings are feelings of pain (dukkha vedana) and the noting of these feelings is insight into feeling (vedana-nupassana).

Those who have no knowledge of insight into feeling, misconceive the view that feelings are their own personality or self. They believe that; it is the self or 'I' that is feeling; such as 'I am feeling stiff; I am feeling warm; I am feeling painful; I was feeling well before but now I feel uncomfortable'. In reality, unpleasant feelings arise owing to disagreeable impressions in the body. Like the light of an electric bulb which can continue to burn on the continuous supply of energy so is the case of feelings, which arise anew in series on every occasion of coming in contact with disagreeable impressions. It is essential to understand these feelings clearly. At the beginning of noting; 'stiff, stiff; warm, warm; painful, painful' the student may feel that such disagreeable feeling grows stronger, and then the student will notice that the mind wanting to change the posture arises. This mind should be noted as 'wanting, wanting'. Then a return should be made to the feeling and noted as 'stiff, stiff', or 'warm, warm', and so forth. If the noting is continued with patience in this manner, such unpleasant feelings will pass away. 'Patience leads to Nibbana' This is more applicable in this case of meditation than in any other actions. Great patience is needed in Vipassana practice. If a student cannot bear unpleasant feelings with patience, but frequently changes his posture during his practice, he cannot expect to gain concentration. Without concentration knowledge of insight (Vipassana-nana) cannot be realised. Patience is much needed to bear up unpleasant feelings.

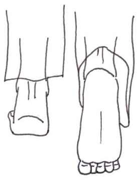
The student should not change his posture immediately when he feels unpleasant sensations but proceed with noting them as ‘stiff, stiff; warm, warm’; and so on. When concentration is well developed, even severe pain will pass away when they are being noted with patience. However, it may be found that pains or unpleasant feelings do not pass away in spite of noting with great patience. In such a case and should a change of posture be necessary, the intention to change and the actual change should be performed mindfully and each movement of change be mindfully noted. Any and all observed physical movements of the body during the course of meditation should be noted; should the body sway, it should be noted as ‘swaying, swaying’; on raising the leg as ‘raising, raising’; on moving as ‘moving, moving’; and on putting down as ‘putting, putting’. ***The preceding act of noting and the one which follows should be without a break in between.*** Similarly the preceding concentration and the one which follows should be close together without a break in between, and the preceding spiritual knowledge (nana) and the one which follows should also be close together without a break. In this manner the gradual development, by stages, of mindfulness, concentration and spiritual knowledge takes place, and depending on their full development the final stage of spiritual knowledge of the Path (magga-nana) is attained.

The practice of Vipassana is akin to kindling a fire by rubbing two dry sticks together. As the sticks heat up, rubbing have to be carried out briskly and incessantly till fire is started. Similarly a student should work hard so that: ***There should not be any break between the preceding noting and the one which follows; the preceding concentration and the one which follows.*** While occupied with his primary exercise of noting rising and falling, the student may feel itching sensations somewhere in the body. He should then fix his mind on the spot and make a note as ‘itching, itching’. Itching is an unpleasant sensation. As soon as it is felt there arises a mind wanting to rub or scratch. This mind should be noted as ‘wanting, wanting’, after which rubbing should not be done as yet but a return must be made to itching and a note made as ‘itching, itching’. While occupied with contemplation in this manner, and concentration is well developed, itching may disappear. Then the primary exercise of noting as ‘rising, falling’ should be continued. Otherwise, if itching does not disappear and it becomes necessary to rub or scratch, the contemplation of the successive movements should be carried out by noting the mind as ‘wanting, wanting’.

While diligently noting, it may be realised that painful feelings or unpleasant sensations arise in the body of their own accord. Most meditators change posture as soon as the slightest unpleasant sensation of tiredness or warm feelings arises. The change is carried out just as pain is beginning to be felt. If this is allowed to happen, painful feelings will fail to take place in a distinctive manner and the whole spectrum of pain unfolding will be missed. The meditator will fail to observe the different phases and grades of pain. ***For this reason it is said that posture hides the painful feelings from the view of reality.*** Generally, most people cannot maintain a sitting posture for long periods without moving or changing; they will feel uncomfortable after a while, and will be unable to bear the discomfort. Such unbearable feelings will cause physical movements; such as movements of the head, the hands, legs or swaying of the body. ***In the course of a normal day numerous such movements will occur; however, they are not being taken heed of as they are not sufficiently prominent to be noticed.***

While in the case of a meditator who is mindful of his actions and is proceeding with diligent noting, body impressions are distinctly noticed. Hence, these physical movements are easily observed. Though a painful sensation arises, the diligent and mindful meditator keeps on noting it; he does not ordinarily attempt to change or move his posture. Then on the arising of a mind desiring to change position, he initially makes a note of it as 'wanting, wanting' and revert to the painful sensation, noting; 'pain, pain'. He does not immediately make the change. ***He changes or moves only when after a long while he finds the pain unbearable; in which case he begins by noting the mind 'wanting, wanting', and proceeds with noting carefully every action in the process of changing position.*** In this case the composed posture opens up the sensation of pain to view. The posture can no longer hide painful sensation. Often a student feels painful sensations creeping from here and there or he may feel a warm sensation, aching sensation, itching, or he may feel that the whole body is a mass of painful sensation. That is how painful sensations are found to be predominating because posture cannot hide these movements from a diligent and mindful student. While in the course of standing up or rising, there occurs lightness in the body. Attention should be fixed on these arising phenomena and a note made as 'rising, rising'. The act of rising up should be carried out slowly.

During the course of practice it is most appropriate if a student acts and moves slowly similar to a sick person in pain. This deliberate slowing down of movements is necessary to enable mindfulness, concentration, and spiritual knowledge to be realised, as in the hastiness of normal daily life, people are unable to maintain mindfulness. It is also advisable that a meditator's stance in the course of training be in an alert and composed manner, restrained and sitting sedately with closed eyes, steady and calm as in the case of a person who is blind. Similarly a student should behave like a deaf person and conduct himself in like manner without taking heed of talk or deliberately listen to any. If he happens to hear any sound or talk he should immediately make a note; 'hearing, hearing', and then return to the primary exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'. He should proceed with his meditation intently as though he cannot hear. It should be remembered that the carrying out intently of meditation is the only concern of a student; other things seen or heard are not his concern and need only to be noted as 'seeing, seeing', or hearing, hearing, as the case may be.



The act of pulling up the body to the standing posture should be carried out slowly. All movements in standing up should be noted. On coming to a standing position a note should be made as 'standing, standing'; if he happens to look around, a note should be made as 'looking, seeing'; and on walking each step should be noted as 'right step, left step' or 'walking, walking'. Attention should be fixed on the movement from the point of lifting the leg to the point of putting down; while walking in quick steps or taking long walks, note on one section of each step as 'right step, left step' or 'walking, walking'. In the case of taking a slow walk, each step may be divided into three sections of lifting, pushing forward and putting down respectively. In the beginning of the exercise a note should be made on two sections in each step as 'lifting', by fixing the attention on the upward movement of the leg from the beginning to the end, and as 'putting' on the downward movement from the beginning to the end. At the time of noting as 'putting' when the leg is let down in the first step, the other leg will habitually begin the next step. This should not be allowed to happen. The next step should begin only after the completion of the first step, such as 'lifting, putting' for the first one and 'lifting, putting' for the next step. Begin by noting as 'right step, left step', or 'walking, walking' while walking quickly, and by noting as 'lifting, putting' while walking slowly.

Should the urge to sit down arise the student should make a note; 'wanting, wanting'; if he looks up as 'looking, looking'; on going to the place for sitting as 'lifting, putting'; on stopping as 'stopping, stopping'; on turning as 'turning, turning'; wanting to sit as 'wanting, wanting'. In the act of sitting there occurs a heavy feeling in the body and also a downward pull. Attention should be fixed on these factors and a note made as 'sitting, sitting'. After having sat down there would be movements of bringing the hands and legs into position. These should be noted as 'moving, bending, stretching'. If he feels sleepy he should make a note as 'sleepy, sleepy', and proceed with the noting of all acts of preparing for lying down and bringing into position the hands and legs. Mindfully noting these acts in lying down are necessary and they should not be neglected. ***Every care is, therefore, needed to carry on the practice of noting without neglect or omission.***

The action of lying down is to be carried out very slowly. On touching the pillow it should be noted as 'touching, touching'; there are many places of touch all over the body but each spot only need be noted at one time. In the lying position there are many bodily actions for bringing the legs and hands into position also. These actions are to be noted carefully, such as 'raising, stretching, bending, moving', and so on. On turning the body a note should be made as 'turning, turning' and when there is nothing particular the primary exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' is to be continued. There may be instances of swallowing or movements in the mouth area, or feeling of painful sensations, hot sensations, itching sensations, etc., or of bodily actions in changing the position and moving the limbs. These are to be noted and contemplated on as each occurs. When sufficient strength in concentration is gained it will be possible even to carry on with the contemplation of each act of opening and closing of the eyelids and winking.

Though it is late in the night and it is time for sleep, it is not advisable to give up the meditation and go to sleep. Anyone who has a keen interest in the practice must be prepared to endure many nights without sleep. In the hard struggle the meditator may be reduced to a mere skeleton of skin, bone and sinew; even his flesh and blood shall wither away and dry up but he should not give up his efforts so long as he has not attained whatever is attainable by manly perseverance, energy and endeavor. **These instructions should be adhered to with strong determination**. It will be possible to keep awake if there is strong enough concentration to beat off sleep.

However, in spite of determination, meditator may not be able to keep himself awake. To avoid falling asleep a beginner should continue his practice in the sitting and walking postures. During the night he can continue noting while lying down; in this position he may perhaps fall asleep. However, it would not be advisable for a student to sleep more than four hours. A student should start his contemplation from the moment he is awake. ***To be fully occupied with diligent noting throughout the waking hours is the routine of a student who practises with true aspiration for the attainment of path and its fruition.***

Should he become aware of the fact of reflecting he should begin his contemplation by noting as 'reflecting, reflecting', and then revert to the primary exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'. Or if he becomes aware firstly of hearing a voice or sound he should begin by noting as 'hearing, hearing', and then revert to the primary exercise of noting; 'rising, falling'. As soon as one wakes up there may be physical actions in turning this side or that side, and in moving the hands and legs and so forth. These actions should be noted in their successive order of arising. Should he become aware of the mind leading to various bodily actions he should start his contemplation by noting the mind in the first place. Or if he becomes aware firstly of the painful sensations he should start by noting the painful sensations and then proceed with bodily actions. If he stays quietly without moving, the primary exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' is to be attended to. Noting should be carried out also in the case of hygiene in the morning or when taking a shower. It is necessary to be diligent in the practice, therefore, noting should be carried out as detailed as possible. There are also many actions in changing or arranging the clothing, in arranging the bed or bed sheets, and in opening the door and so on. All bodily and mental actions should be noted in detail successively as much as possible. As in the case of taking a meal, contemplation should be started from the time of looking at the meal table as 'looking, seeing; looking, seeing';
when stretching the hand to the plate as 'stretching, stretching';
when the hand touches the food as 'touching, hot, hot';
when gathering the food as 'gathering, gathering';
when catching hold of the food as 'catching, catching';
after lifting when the hand is being brought up as 'bringing, bringing';
when the neck is being bent down as 'bending, bending'.
When the food is being placed in the mouth as 'placing, placing';
when withdrawing the hand as 'withdrawing, withdrawing'.

When the hand touches the plate as ‘touching, touching’;
when the neck is being straightened as ‘straightening, straightening’;
when chewing the food as ‘chewing, chewing’.
when he likes the taste as ‘liking, liking’;
when he finds it pleasant as ‘pleasant, pleasant’;
when swallowing as ‘swallowing, swallowing’.
It will be difficult to follow up all actions at the beginning of the practice. The meditator should not, however, hesitate but must try and follow up as much as he can. With the gradual advancement of the practice it will be easy to note many more than those mentioned here.

CONTEMPLATION

It will be appropriate at this juncture to have an appreciation of the act of ‘contemplation’ in the context of Vipassana meditation. As one observes the arising of mind and matter, one sees for oneself that all arising phenomena will arise and also disappears, following the moment of their arising. At the moment of their appearing and disappearing one realises that each and every phenomenon do not last; that they will appear and they will disappear. When sufficient mindfulness has concentrated one’s mind, one will then realise that these arising and disappearing phenomena are truly of the character of impermanence. This realisation did not arise due to thinking or intelligent analysis, it arose due to direct observation by one self. One further realises that given the impermanent nature of all arising and disappearing phenomena; that such arising and disappearing phenomena are truly unstable and unsatisfactory, they are inconsistent and one cannot depend on them for any stability. Continuing on in this mental state of observing the true state of arising and disappearing phenomena, one comes to realise that there is nothing oneself can do to prevent their arising and disappearing; one realises that these phenomena come and go due to conditions that initiate their coming and going. Due to these forms of mental observation, known as contemplation, one realises the characteristic of all phenomena; that they are impermanent; of a suffering nature and that there is not an entity call soul or self that one can depend on to empower these conditional arising and disappearing. By such contemplation one is able to realise the form and construction of mind and matter and hence realise further direct knowledge that will bring about Vipassana insight knowledge or supramundane wisdom. Contemplation is the realisation of this process going through the mind. Hence contemplation in the context of Vipassana is the process of reality formed in the mind by direct observation.

SUMMARY: IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL POINTS

While in a sitting posture the primary exercise of noting the movements of the abdomen as 'rising, falling; rising, falling' should be carried out. The same manner of noting as 'rising, falling; rising, falling' should be carried out in the case of lying posture also. If the practice is continued in the manner indicated, the number of objects noted will gradually increase. At first there will be many omissions because the untrained mind will habitually wander. This difficulty is usually encountered in the beginning of the practice. After some time mind cannot play truant any longer because it is always found out every time it wanders. It, therefore, remains fixed on an object to which it is directed. As rising occurs, the mind makes a note of it; the object and the mind coincide. As falling occurs, the mind makes a note of it; these two coincide. ***There is always a pair, Object and Mind; the Mind Knows the Object at every time of noting. There are only these two elements: Material Object and Knowing Mind arising in A Pair. Apart from these two there does not exist any other thing. either in the form of person or self. The student will realise this truth directly by himself in due course of practice.***

The fact that **Matter** and **Mind** are two separate things will be clearly perceived during the time of noting the 'rising and falling' of the abdomen. The two elements of Matter and Mind are linked up in a pair and the arising coincides, that is, the material process of rising coincides with the mind knowing it, the material process of falling coincides with the mind knowing it, and the respective processes of lifting, pushing, putting coincide with the respective minds knowing the processes. ***This Knowledge in respect of Matter and Mind rising separately is Spiritual Knowledge of Insight*** (nama-rupa pariccheda nana).It is the preliminary stage in the whole course of spiritual knowledge of insight. It is important to have this preliminary stage developed in a proper manner. On continuing the practice of meditation for some time, there will be a considerable progress in mindfulness and concentration. At this advanced level it will be realised that, on every occasion of noting, each element of mind and matter arises and disappears at the very moment. However, in those who are not Vipassana trained, they generally consider that body and mind are one and that they remain in a permanent state throughout their life, that the same body of their birth had matured into manhood, that the same young mind has matured and that both body and mind are one and the same person.

Unfortunately, the Reality is Not So. Nothing is Permanent. Everything comes into existence for a moment, and then disappears. Nothing can remain static even for a moment. Changes are taking place very swiftly and this will be realised by the Vipassana practitioner in due course. On realising that everything disappears at the very point of noting, a student is satisfied with the fact that nothing is permanent. This knowledge regarding the impermanent state of things is spiritual insight into transience (anicca-nupassana-nana). A student then feels that this ever-changing state of things is distressing and not to be desired. This is insight into suffering (dukkhanupassana-nana).

Then it is realised that the elements of Matter and Mind do not comply with one's wish, but they act according to their own nature and conditioning. While being engaged in the act of noting the processes, a student is convinced that these processes are not controllable and they are neither person nor living entity nor self in the real sense. This is insight into the Absence of a Self (anattanupassana-nana).

When taking up the course of training in Vipassana, students should bear in mind that they are on the high way which had been travelled on by Blessed Ones, Arahants and Holy Ones. This present opportunity accorded to them is due to their perfection of previous aspirations and endeavors, and also of their present mature condition. They should find joy with this opportunity. They should also feel assured that by walking on this high way without wavering, they will gain the personal experience of the highly developed concentration and knowledge as had already been known to Blessed Ones, Arahants and Holy Ones.

BOOK II
PRACTICAL INSIGHT MEDITATION
BASIC AND PROGRESSIVE STAGES

SITTING AND WALKING MEDITATION
BASIC PRACTICE

A Mahasi Discourse

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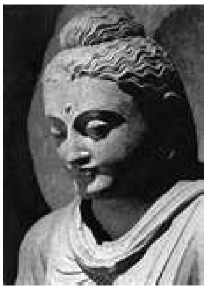

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BASIC PRACTICE: SITTING MEDITATION

Life is Uncertain and Precarious, Sure and Certain is Death; For the Uninitiated there is Suffering and Rebirth. Vipassana is The Only Gateway to Deathlessness.

In the Great Discourse on the ***Four Foundations of Mindfulness*** (Maha Satipatthana Sutta DN22) where the Buddha discoursed on mindfulness meditation, He states: "A bhikkhu knows, 'I am going', when he is going; he knows, 'I am standing', when he is standing; he knows, 'I am sitting', when he is sitting; he knows, 'I am lying down', when he is lying down or just as his body is disposed, so he knows it." Here the Buddha was instructing the bhikkhus (monks) to apply mindfulness, concentration and clear comprehension to all of four postures in meditation. The primary posture for meditation is sitting with legs crossed; this position has the advantage of stabilising the body, assisting in the development of concentration; however, walking meditation is an important part of the process of the uninterrupted accumulation of mindfulness. There are two other positions; lying down and standing. All the four positions have their functions; meditators are mostly concern with the sitting and walking meditation.

BASIC EXERCISE I: NOTING MATTER (rupa)

To begin training, take the sitting posture with legs crossed. You might feel more comfortable if the legs are not interlocked but evenly placed on the ground, without pressing one against the other. If you find that sitting on the floor interferes with contemplation, then obtain a more comfortable way of sitting. The primary exercise is to be aware of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen when breathing in and out. If these movements are not clear in the beginning, then place both hands on the abdomen to feel these rising and falling movements. When your concentration improves in the course of your practice, the upward movement and the downward movement of the abdomen will become clear. As you become aware of the abdomen rising, make a mental note, 'rising' for the upward movement, 'falling' for the downward movement. When noting the phenomena of rising and falling; the student should keep his mental awareness on the movements of the abdomen; not the material abdomen.

He will come to know the upward movement (expansion) of the abdomen while breathing in, and a downward movement (contraction) while breathing out. A mental note should be made as 'rising' for upward movements, and 'falling' for downward movements. If these movements are not clearly noticed by mental observation, one or both hands can be placed on the abdomen to feel the movements.

In observing the rising and falling movements, the student should maintain his natural breathing and not attempt to slow down or increase the tempo of his breathing, as this will soon tire him. He should keep to a natural breathing, and proceed with the noting of rising and falling. Occasions may arise where awareness of the rising and falling of the abdomen be confused with the breathing process, in which case a note must be made of 'breathing, breathing', and awareness be directed back to the rising and falling of the abdomen. Bear in mind that the primary object of meditation is the rising and falling of the abdomen, other arising object, including the breath is the secondary object; to be noted and attention be reverted back to the rising and falling of the abdomen. The labeling of the notings should not be verbal; as it is only necessary to know the actual state of the object than to know it by the term or name.

The student should make every effort to be ***diligently mindful of the movement of rising from the beginning till the end and that of falling from the start to the finish,*** as if these movements are actually seen by the eyes. As soon as rising occurs, there should be the knowing mind swiftly locking on to the movement, as an arrow swiftly connecting with the target: ***The movement of rising as it occurs and the mind knowing it must coincide on each and every occasion. Similarly the movement of falling as it occurs and the mind knowing it must coincide on each and every occasion.***

BASIC EXERCISE II: NOTING MENTAL ACTIVITIES (nama)

While observing the abdominal movements, other mental activities may occur between the noting of each rising and falling. Thoughts or other mental functions, such as intentions, ideas, imagination, are likely to arise between each mental note of rising and falling. They cannot be disregarded. A mental note must be made of each as it occurs. ***When imagining; mentally note 'imagining'. When thinking; mentally note 'thinking'. When reflecting; mentally note 'reflecting'. When intending to do a deed; mentally note 'intending'.***

When the mind wanders away from the primary object of meditation, mentally note 'wandering'. When thinking of meeting a person, note 'thinking'. When imagining an argument; mentally note, 'arguing'. Any mental vision, every intention arising must be noted, after which return to observing the rising and falling of the abdomen. Proceed diligently, without slackening.

BASIC EXERCISE III: NOTING ARISING PHENOMENA

The student, after meditating for a considerable length of time in one position; that of sitting or lying down, is likely to experience feelings of fatigue, stiffness in the body, the arms or the legs. Should this happen, simply keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where such feeling occurs and carry on the practice, noting 'tired, tired' or 'stiff, stiff'. This is to be done naturally; neither too fast nor too slow. These feelings gradually become fainter and finally cease altogether. Should one of these feelings become more intense or unbearable, only then should the position be changed. However, do not forget to make a mental note of 'intending, intending', before executing the change of position. Each movement must be noted in its respective order. ***Then in the act of lifting the hand or leg, 'lifting, lifting'; stretching the hand or the leg, 'stretching, stretching'. When bending, 'bending, bending'. When putting down, 'putting, putting'. Should either the hand or leg touch, 'touching, touching'. Perform all these actions in a slow and deliberate manner.***

As soon as the student is settled in the new position, continue with the contemplation of the abdominal movements. If it becomes uncomfortably warm in the new position resume meditation in another position keeping to the procedure as described in this paragraph. Should an itching sensation be felt in any part of the body, keep the mind on that part and make a mental note, 'itching, itching'. Do this in a regulated manner, neither too fast nor too slow. Should the itching continue and become too strong and you intend to rub the itching part, be sure to make a mental note, 'intending, intending'; then, slowly lift the hand, simultaneously noting the action of 'lifting', and 'touching' when the hand touches the part that itches. Rub slowly in complete awareness of 'rubbing'.

When the itching sensation has disappeared and there is intention to discontinue the rubbing, mindfully note; 'intending, intending'; slowly withdraw the hand, noting the action, 'withdrawing, withdrawing'. When the hand rests and touches the leg; note 'touching, touching'. Then again devote your time to observing the rising and falling of the abdomen.

If there is pain or discomfort, keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where the sensation arises. Make a mental note of the specific sensation as it occurs, such as 'painful, aching, pressing, piercing', or as the case may be.

It must be stressed that the mental note must not be forced or delayed but made in a calm and natural manner at the moment of the arising phenomenon. The pain may eventually cease or increase. Do not be alarmed if it increases. Firmly continue meditating. If you do so, you will find that the pain will almost always cease. But if, after a time, the pain has increased and becomes almost unbearable, you must ignore the pain and continue with the noting of rising and falling. As mindfulness improves, stifling or choking sensations; sensations of intense pain, such as pain from the slash of a knife, the thrust of a sharp-pointed instrument; unpleasant sensations of being pricked by sharp needles, or small insects crawling over the body may arise. Other sensations of itching, biting, intense cold may also arise. As soon as meditation is discontinued, these painful sensations will cease. When meditation is resumed they may also reappear.

These painful sensations are not to be considered as something serious. They are not manifestations of disease but are common factors always present in the body and are usually obscured as the mind is normally distracted with other more conspicuous objects. As the practice improves and the faculties of Faith, Effort, Concentration, Mindfulness and Wisdom, is advanced and becomes keener, awareness of these sensations are more pronounced. With the continued development of the practice, the time will arrive when these sensations are overcome and they cease altogether. If noting is continued diligently, these sensations will cease. Should noting be intermittent, these unpleasant sensations may arise again and again as your practice proceeds. With diligent, steadfast noting and wise contemplation in the practice, these painful sensations may never again arise.

Occasionally, during the practice, swaying of the body may occur. Do not be alarmed; neither be pleased nor wish to continue swaying, as this movement can be a source of pleasant feeling. The swaying will cease when noted. If swaying increases in spite of your making mental note of it, then lean against a wall of post or lie down for a while. Thereafter continue with the practice. Follow the same procedure if you find yourself shaking or trembling. You may sometimes feel a thrill or chill pass through the back or the entire body.

This is a feeling of intense interest, enthusiasm or rapture. It occurs naturally in the course of diligent practice. When your mind is concentrated in your meditation, you may be startled at the slightest sound; do not be overly concerned, as this is the result of intensified sensorial impression while in the state of deep concentration.

When you intend to stand, 'intending'. Then make a mental note of each movement in the preparation to stand. Keep the mind intently on the act of standing up, and mentally note, 'standing'. When standing for some time, continue noting rising and falling. When sitting, sit down slowly, and keep the mind on the downward movement of the body. You must note every movement in bringing hands and legs into position, after which, resume the noting of the abdominal movements. When intending to lie down; note 'intending'; then proceed with diligent noting every movement in the course of lying down: 'lifting, stretching, leaving, touching, lying'. Make a mental note of 'drowsy', when drowsy, and 'sleepy', when sleepy. After you have gained sufficient concentration in the practice, you will be able to overcome drowsiness and sleepiness and feel refreshed as a result. Take up again the primary noting of the rising and falling of the abdomen. Suppose you are unable to overcome a drowsy feeling; you must then continue to meditate until you fall asleep.

The practice of meditation should begin at the moment of waking up. Therefore, when opening the eyes at the moment of waking up and in the process of getting up from the bed, mindfulness should be directed to every detail of the body's activity. Each movement of the hands, legs and all other involved physical elements must be performed in complete awareness. Perform the acts of washing the face or taking a bath in their order and in complete awareness of every detailed movement; for instance, 'looking, seeing, stretching, holding, touching, feeling cold, rubbing'. In the acts of dressing, making the bed, opening and closing doors and windows, handling objects, diligently note every detail of these actions in their order.

ADVANCING THE PRACTICE

After having meditated for some time, you may find your practice of the basic exercise of noting the abdominal rising and falling has considerably improved. At this time you will note that there is generally a break between the movements of rising and falling. If you are in the sitting posture, fill in this pause with a mental note on the act of sitting, in this way: 'rising, falling, sitting'.

When you make a mental note of sitting, keep your mind on the erect position of the upper body. When you are lying down you should proceed with full awareness as follows: 'rising, falling, lying'. If you find this easy, continue with noting these three sections. Should you note that a pause occurs at the end of the rising as well as the falling movement, then continue in this manner: 'rising, sitting, falling, sitting'; or if lying down: 'rising, lying, falling, lying'. When conditions change and you no longer find it easy to make a mental note of three or four objects in the above manner; then revert to the initial procedure of noting only the two sections, 'rising' and 'falling'. ***Should any distinctive phenomenon arise from any of the six sense doors; note each as they come to your mind.*** If you fail to note such distinctive sights and sounds as they occur, you may inadvertently fall into reflections about them instead of proceeding with diligent noting of rising and falling, which may then become less distinct and clear. It is by such weakened attention that mind-defiling passions breed. If such reflections do occur, make two or three times the mental note, 'reflecting', and again take up the noting of rising and falling. Should you forget to make a mental note of body, leg or arm movements, then mentally note 'forgetting', and resume your usual noting of the abdominal movements.

You may feel at times that breathing is slow or that the rising and falling movements of the abdomen are not clearly perceived. When this happens, and you are in the sitting position, simply carry on the attention to 'sitting, touching'; if you are lying down, 'lying, touching'. While noting 'touching', your mind should not be kept on the same part of the body but on different parts successively. There are several places of touch and at least six or seven should be noted.

BASIC EXERCISE IV

Up to this point you have devoted quite some time to the training course. You might begin to feel lazy after deciding that you have made inadequate progress; note the fact, 'lazy'. Before you gain sufficient strength in awareness, concentration and insight, you may doubt the correctness or usefulness of this method of training. In such a circumstance, note 'doubtful'. If you had anticipated or wish for good results; note 'anticipating' or 'wishing'. When attempting to recall the manner in which this training was conducted note 'recollecting'. When regretting that there is no perceivable improvement; note 'regret'.

If feeling happy, note ‘happy’. This is the way in which you make a mental note of every item of mental behavior as it occurs, and if there are no intervening thoughts or perceptions to note, you should continue with the primary meditation object of noting rising and falling of the abdomen.

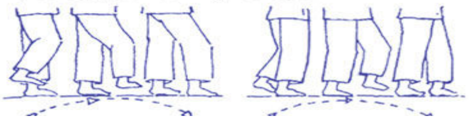
During a strict course of meditation, the time of practice is from the first moment you wake up until you fall asleep. To repeat, you must be constantly occupied either with the basic exercise or with mindful attention throughout the day and during those hours when you are not asleep. There must be no relaxation. Upon reaching a certain stage of progress in your practice, you will not feel sleepy in spite of prolonged hours. On the contrary, you will be able to continue meditating day and night.

WALKING MEDITATION - Sayadaw u Silananda (An edited excerpt)
Meditators practising mindfulness in the four different postures, walking, standing, sitting and lying down, must maintain mindfulness at all times in whatever position they are in. Walking meditation is of equal importance to sitting meditation as there are significant benefits and materialising of supramundane knowledge arising from its practise. The practise of mindfulness meditation can be compared to boiling water. If one wants to boil water, one puts the water in a kettle, puts the kettle over a stove, and then turns the heat on. But if the heat is turned off and on, the water will not reach boiling point. In the same way, if there are gaps breaking up mindfulness, one cannot gain momentum, and concentration will not be achieved. Meditators are advised to practise mindfulness the moment they are awake in the morning until they fall asleep at night.

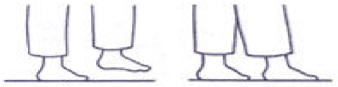
The Blessed One taught that a meditator should be aware: "I am walking" when he is walking; that "I am standing" when he is standing; that "I am sitting" when he is sitting, and that "I am lying down" when he is lying down. A meditator should also apply clear comprehension in going forward and in going back. **Clear Comprehension** means the correct understanding of what one observes. To correctly understand what is observed, a meditator must gain concentration, and in order to gain concentration, he must apply mindfulness. In the beginning of the practice, meditators may find it difficult to do this. However, they need to pay close attention to the movements of lifting, moving forward, putting down, and pressing the ground with the feet; therefore it is very important that they reduce the speed of their walking pace.

STEPS IN WALKING MEDITATION

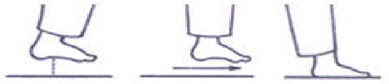
THE 1ST STAGE OF WALKING MEDITATION


Right Step
Left Step

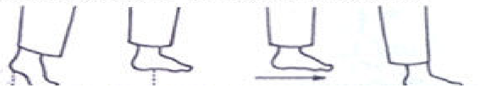
THE 2ND STAGE OF WALKING MEDITATION


Lifting
Placing

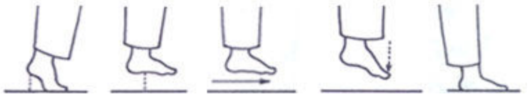
THE 3RD STAGE OF WALKING MEDITATION


Lifting
Pushing
Placing

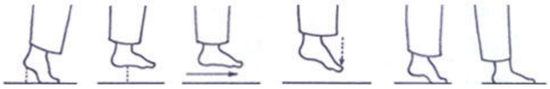
THE 4TH STAGE OF WALKING MEDITATION


Lifting
Raising
Pushing
Placing

THE FIFTH STAGE OF WALKING MEDITATION


Lifting
Raising
Pushing
Dropping
Placing

THE 6TH STAGE OF WALKING MEDITATION


Lifting
Raising
Pushing
Dropping
Touching
Pressing

Only when they slow down can they be truly mindful and fully aware of the walking movements. Although meditators pay close attention and slow down, they may not see all stages of the movement of the walking steps clearly. The stages of movements of the steps may not yet be well-defined in the mind, and the different stages of walking movements may appear to be only one continuous movement. As concentration grows stronger, meditators will be able to observe clearly these different stages in one step of walking movement, with at least four stages being easy to distinguish.

With mindful concentration, meditators will distinctly observe that the lifting movement of the foot is not the same as the moving forward movement of the foot; they will further observe that the moving forward movement is not the same movement as the lifting movement or the putting down movement. With deep concentration and while deliberately slowing down the movements of the steps, they will be able to observe all stages of the steps clearly and distinctly. Whatever they are mindful and aware of will be very clear in their minds. As meditators carry on the walking meditation, slowly and mindfully, they will observe much more; in particular; when the foot is lifted, lightness of the foot is experienced; when the foot is pushed forward, movement from one place to another is experienced; when the foot is going down, heaviness will be experienced; when the foot is pressing on the ground, the touching sensation is felt.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS

While observing lifting, moving forward, putting down, and pressing the ground, meditators will also perceive the lightness of the rising foot, the motion of the foot, the heaviness of the descending foot, and then the touching of the foot, which is the hardness or softness of the foot on the ground. ***When meditators perceive these processes, they become aware of the four essential elements: Earth, Water, Fire, and Air. By paying close attention to these four stages of walking meditation, the four elements in their true essence are perceived, not merely as concepts, but as actual processes, as ultimate realities.***

In the first movement, that is, the lifting of the foot, **meditators perceive lightness**, and when they perceive lightness, they virtually perceive the **fire element**. One aspect of the fire element is that of making things lighter, and as things become lighter, they rise. In the perception of the lightness in the upward movement of the foot, meditators perceive the essence of the fire element.

At the same time, in the lifting of the foot there is also, besides lightness, movement. **Movement is one aspect of the air element.** But lightness, the fire element, is dominant, so we can say that in the stage of lifting the fire element is primary, and the air element is secondary. These two elements are perceived by meditators when they pay close attention to the lifting of the foot.

The next stage is moving the foot forward. In moving the foot forward, the dominant element is the air element, because motion is one of the primary characteristics of the air element. So, when they pay close attention to the moving forward of the foot in walking meditation, meditators are virtually perceiving the essence of the **air element.**

The next stage is the movement of putting the foot down. When meditators put their foot down, there is a lingering heaviness in the movement. **Heaviness is a characteristic of the water element, as is trickling and oozing.** When liquid is heavy, as in molasses, it oozes and pours out slowly. So when meditators perceive the heaviness of the foot, they virtually perceive the **water element.**

In pressing the foot on the ground, meditators will perceive the hardness or softness of the foot on the ground. This pertains to the nature of the earth element, hardness or softness. By paying close attention to the pressing of the foot against the ground, meditators virtually perceive the nature of the **earth element.**

Therefore, in just one step, meditators can perceive many processes. They can perceive the four elements and the nature of the four elements. Only those who practise Vipassana Mindfulness will realise these insights. As meditators continue to practise walking meditation, they will come to realise that, with every movement, there is also the noting mind, the awareness of the movement. There is the lifting movement and also the mind that is aware of that lifting. In the next moment, there is the moving forward movement and also the mind that is aware of the movement. Moreover, meditators will realise that both the movement and the awareness arise and disappear in that moment. In the next moment, there is the putting down movement and so also the awareness of the movement, and both arise and disappear in that moment of putting the foot down on the ground. The same process occurs with the pressing of the foot: there is the pressing and the awareness of pressing.

In this way, meditators understand that along with the movement of the foot, there are also the moments of awareness. The moments of awareness, in Pali is **nama; mind,** and the movement of the foot is **rupa; matter.** Meditators will perceive mind and matter rising and disappearing at every moment. At one moment there is the lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting, and at the next moment there is the movement forward and the awareness of that movement, and so on. These can be observed as a pair; mind and matter, which arise and disappear at every moment. Therefore, meditators advance to the perception of the dual occurrence of mind and matter at every moment of observing the steps in motion.

Another thing that meditators will discover is the role of intention in effecting each movement. They will realise that they lift their foot because they want to, move the foot forward because they want to, put it down because they want to, press the foot against the ground because they want to. That is, they realise that an intention precedes every movement. After the intention to lift, lifting occurs. They come to understand the conditionality of all of these occurrences; these movements never occur by themselves, without conditions. These movements are not created by any deity or any authority, and these movements never happen without a cause. ***There is a cause or condition for every movement, and that condition is the intention preceding each movement. This is another discovery meditators make when they pay close attention while walking at a slow, mindful pace.*** When meditators realise the conditionality of all movements, and that these movements are not created by any authority or any god, then they will know that these movements are caused by intention. They will realise that intention is the condition for the movements to occur. By this contemplation, the relationship of conditioning and conditioned, of cause and effect, is seen directly and realised by the meditators. On the basis of this realisation, meditators can remove doubt about nama and rupa and that nama and rupa do not arise without conditions.

With the clear realisation of the conditionality of things, and with the transcendence of doubt about nama and rupa, a meditator is said to reach the stage of a "lesser sotapanna." A "lesser sotapanna" is not a true stream-enterer but is said to be assured of rebirth in a happy realm of existence, such as in the realms of human beings and devas.

That is, a lesser sotapanna is able to escape rebirth in one of the four woeful states, in one of the hells or animal realms. ***This state of lesser sotapanna can be reached just by practising walking meditation, just by paying close attention to the movements involved in a step.*** This is the great benefit of practising walking meditation. This stage is not easily attainable, but once meditators reach it, they can be assured that they will be reborn in a happy state, unless, of course, they fall from that stage.

When meditators realise mind and matter arise and disappear at every moment, they also realise the impermanence of the processes of lifting the foot, as well as the impermanence of the awareness of that lifting. The occurrence of disappearing after arising is a characteristic of impermanence. It is only through Vipassana meditation that we can observe and realise this particular characteristic of any phenomenon and it is by such realisation that we can see the impermanence of that phenomenon.

If our meditation is advanced enough it will enable us to see the arising and disappearing of phenomena, thereby coming to the conclusion that the phenomena observed are impermanent. In this way, meditators observe directly by themselves that there is the lifting movement and awareness of that movement; then that sequence disappears, giving way to the pushing forward movement and the awareness of pushing forward. These movements arise and disappear. This process is observed by meditators through direct knowledge; they did not receive this knowledge from any external source. When meditators observe mind and matter arise and disappear, they realise that mind and matter are impermanent and are unsatisfactory due to their constant arising and disappearing. Contemplating on the impermanence and the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomena, meditators realise that there can be no mastery over these things; that there is no self or soul within that can order them to be permanent. They know that phenomena arise and disappear according to conditions. By this realisation, meditators also realise the third characteristic of conditioned phenomena, the characteristic of anatta; that phenomena are not souls or selves; that they arise and disappear due to conditions.

Hence, by practising walking meditation, meditators have realised the three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena: impermanence, suffering, and their non-self nature.

Now let us examine in more detail the movements of walking meditation. Suppose one were to take a moving picture of the lifting of the foot. Suppose further that the lifting of the foot takes one second, and let us say that the camera can take thirty-six frames per second. After taking the picture, if we were to look at the separate frames, we would realise that within what we thought was one lifting movement, there are actually thirty-six movements. The image in each frame is slightly different from the images in the preceding frames, though the difference will usually be so slight that we can barely notice it. If the camera could take one thousand frames per second, then there would be one thousand movements in just one lifting movement, although the movements would be almost impossible to differentiate. If the camera could take one million frames per second, which may be impossible now, but someday may happen, then there would be one million movements in what we thought to be only one movement. ***Walking meditation allows us to see our movements as closely as the camera sees them, frame by frame and to observe the awareness and intention preceding each movement.***

Before meditators begin practising walking meditation, they may have thought that a step is just one movement. After meditation on that movement, they observe that there are at least four movements, and if they go deeper, they will understand that even one of these four movements consists of millions of tiny movements. ***They see Mind and Matter*** (nama and rupa) ***Rising and Disappearing, as Impermanent.***

Under normal circumstances, we are not able to see the impermanence of things because impermanence is hidden by the illusion of continuity. We think that we see only one continuous movement, but if we look closely we will see that the ***illusion of continuity can be broken***. It can be broken by the direct observation of physical phenomena bit by bit, segment by segment, as they originate and disintegrate. ***Hence; the true value of meditation is to render us the ability to remove the cloak of continuity in order to discover the real nature of Impermanence. Meditators can discover the nature of impermanence directly through their own effort.***

On realising that things are composed of segments, that they occur in bits, and after observing these segments one by one, meditators will realise that there is really nothing in this world to be attached to, nothing to crave for.

When we see that something which we once thought beautiful has holes, that it is decaying and disintegrating, we will be disillusioned. For example, we may see a beautiful painting on a canvas. We think of the paint and canvas conceptually as a whole, solid thing. But if we were to put the painting under a powerful microscope, we would see that the picture is not solid; it has many holes and spaces. After seeing the picture as composed largely of spaces, we would lose interest in it and we would cease being attached to it. Physicists have observed, with powerful instruments, that matter is just a vibration of particles and energy constantly changing; there is nothing substantial to it at all. By the realisation of this endless impermanence, meditators understand that there is really nothing to crave for, nothing to hold on to in the entire world of phenomena.

It is by comprehending the three characteristics of existence; impermanence, suffering and the non-self nature of things; that we remove craving.

If we do not want to suffer continuous rebirths in samsara, a place of suffering, we must remove craving and attachment. We must comprehend that all things are just mind and matter arising and disappearing, that things are insubstantial. Once we realise this, we will be able to remove attachment to things. As long as we do not realise this, however much we read books or attend talks or talk about removing attachment, we will not be able to get rid of attachment. It is necessary to have the direct experience that all conditioned things are marked by the three characteristics.

Hence we must pay close attention when we are walking. Walking meditation is conducive to spiritual development. It is as powerful as mindfulness of breathing or mindfulness of the rising and falling of the abdomen. It is an efficient tool to help us remove mental defilement. Walking meditation can help us gain insight into the nature of things, and we should practise it as diligently as we practise sitting meditation or any other kind of meditation.

BOOK III
VIPASSANA JHANAS
Sayadaw U. Pandita Bhivamsa

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VIPASSANA JHANA Sayadaw U. Pandita Bhivamsa

WISDOM SOFTENS THE MIND (An Excerpt)

Right Effort, Right Aim, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration: all these are factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. When they are present in the mind, the defilement (kilesa) have no chance to arise. The defilement, which hardens the mind, causing it to be rigid and agitated, are dispelled when one is with the moment, and so the mind has a chance to soften. With continuous noting the mind gradually becomes more able to penetrate into the true nature of things. There comes the insight that everything is but just ***Mind and Matter***, and the mind experiences a huge sense of relief. ***No one is there, just mind and matter, with no one creating them.*** If we can further see how these phenomena are conditioned, the mind will be free of doubts. A meditator whose mind is full of doubts, rigid, tough and tense is difficult to teach and work with. If such a meditator can be persuaded to practise at least enough to gain insight into cause and effect, there will be no more problem. This insight clears the mind of doubt and makes it soft. The meditator will no longer wonder whether these phenomena of Mind and Matter might be created by some external force, another being, invisible or supreme.

As one becomes more profoundly aware of the moment, the mind becomes softer and more relaxed as the hold of defilement loosens. Hence, while observing the fleeting nature of Mental and Physical Phenomena, one gains insight into their impermanence. As a direct consequence of this process, one is freed from pride and conceit. If one sees clearly the tremendous stress brought about by phenomena, one gains insight into their dis-ease and suffering nature and is freed from cravings. If one sees the absence of self in all phenomena, realising that the process of Mind and Matter is empty and not at all related to one's wishes, one can be freed from the wrong view that there is some permanent entity called the 'self'. This is only the beginning; the more profound one penetrates into the true nature of reality, the more one's mind becomes flexible, pliable, workable and dextrous. If one attains the first path consciousness, the first experience of Nibbana, some defilement will never make the mind tense and rigid again.

BLOWING OUT SUFFERING

The Blessed One said: ***"One should not allow the mind to wander without, neither should one allow the mind to stop within. One who is able to be mindful in that way will eventually be able to extinguish all sufferings."*** If the mind comes into contact with a pleasant, desirable, tempting object, it is naturally filled with greed. This is the moment we say it has wandered off. When it touches a disgusting, painful object, it is filled with aversion. Again it becomes a wandering mind. The mind veiled in delusion, unable to see what is happening, is also a mind that has run away.

THE SENSING PROCESS WITH AND WITHOUT MINDFULNESS

All the sensing processes occur through a series of consciousness which are neither wholesome nor unwholesome. Immediately after this series, however, if mindfulness does not intervene, there will occur a second and perhaps a third or fourth series of consciousness accompanied by greed, hatred and delusion. Vipassana practice sharpens mindfulness until it can catch the bare sensing process at the end of the amoral series of consciousnesses and forestall the arising of further series accompanied by greed, hatred and delusion. If a mind can make this interception, we say that it is not wandering. The wandering mind is the mind that has been defiled as it reflects on what has happened or what is happening. Practically speaking, if we begin to reflect upon the characteristics of the object; "Oh what a gorgeous colour"; we know the mind has wandered off.

If, on the other hand, we activate precise and penetrative mindfulness and diligent effort at the moment of seeing that coloured object, we have the chance to understand the seeing process for what it really is. This is the chance to develop wisdom. We can see the relationship of mind to matter, the conditionality that relates them, and the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and absence of self they share.

If the mind makes an effort to be precisely aware of the rise and fall of the abdomen, actually to feel them from beginning to end, it will be freed from greed, hatred and delusion. There are neither thoughts of pleasurable objects, nor aversion to unpleasant objects, nor deluded confusion about what is going on. The mind has not wandered away. If the mind leaves the rising and falling and attends to and reflect on any sound or sight it can be said that the mind has wandered away.

JHANA

There are yet deeper aspects of not wandering. The mind that is not wandering is the mind that is penetratively mindful of what is happening. The word 'penetrative' is not used casually. It refers to a mental factor that must arise in the mind. This is a jhanic factor. Jhana is usually translated as 'absorption' and refers to the quality of mind that is able to stick to an object and observe it. It is like shooting an arrow straight into the centre of a target. There are two types of jhana, ***Samatha* and *Vipassana Jhana*.**

Samatha jhana is pure concentration, fixed awareness of a single object; a mental image. The mind is fixed on this object without wavering or moving elsewhere. Eventually the mind develops a very peaceful, tranquil, concentrated state and becomes absorbed in the object. Different levels of absorption are described in the texts, each having specific qualities.

Conversely, Vipassana jhana allows the mind to move freely from object to object, staying focussed on the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and absence of self that are common to all objects. Vipassana jhana also includes the mind which can stay focussed and fixed upon the bliss of Nibbana. Rather than the tranquillity and absorption which are the goal of samatha jhana practitioners, the most important results of Vipassana jhana are insight and wisdom.

Vipassana jhana is the focussing of the mind on 'ultimate realities', the things we can experience directly through the six sense doors without conceptualisation; such as mental and physical phenomena which are changing all the time. Nibbana is also an ultimate reality, but it is not conditioned. Breathing is a good example of conditioned process. The sensations you feel at the abdomen are conditioned ultimate realities, caused by your intention to breathe. The whole purpose of concentrating one's attention on the abdomen is to penetrate the actual quality and nature of what is happening there. ***When you are aware of movement, tension, tautness, heat or cold, you have begun to develop Vipassana jhana.*** Mindfulness at the respective sense doors follows the same principle. If there is diligent effort and penetrative awareness, focussing on what is happening in any particular sense process, the mind will understand the true nature of what is happening. These sensing processes will be understood in individual characteristics as well as common ones.

THE FIVE JHANIC FACTORS

In the four levels of jhana, the first jhana possesses five factors which we will describe below. All of them are important in Vipassana practice. The first of them is called **vitakka.** It is the factor of aiming accurately directing the mind towards an object. It also has the aspect of establishing the mind on the object, so that the mind stays there.

The second factor is ***vicara***, 'investigation' or 'reflection'. After vitakka has brought the mind to the object and placed it firmly there, vicara continues to rub the mind onto the object. You can experience this yourself when observing rising and falling. First you make the effort to be precise in aiming the mind at the rising process. Then your mind reaches the object and it does not slip off. It impinges on the object, rubs against it. As you are mindful in an intuitive and accurate way from moment to moment, the mind gets more and more pure. The hindrances of desire, aversion, sloth, restlessness and doubt weaken and disappear. The mind becomes crystal clear and calm. This state of clarity results from the presence of the two jhanic factors we just discussed. It is called *viveka*, which means seclusion. The consciousness is secluded, far away from the hindrances. This viveka is not a jhanic factor. It is merely a descriptive term for this secluded state of consciousness.

The third jhanic factor is ***piti***, rapture, a delighted interest in what is occurring. This factor may manifest physically as gooseflesh, as feelings of being dropped suddenly as if in an elevator, or as feelings of rising off the ground.

The fourth jhanic factor, **sukha**, happiness or comfort, comes on the heels of the third. One feels very satisfied with the practice. Both the third and fourth jhanic factors come about as a result of seclusion from the hindrances, and is a state of rapture, joy and happiness born out of seclusion.

Think of this sequence as a causal chain. Seclusion of mind comes about because of the presence of the first two jhanic factors. If the mind is accurately aimed at the object, if it hits and rubs it, after some time the mind will become secluded. Because this mind is secluded from the hindrances, one becomes happy, joyous and comfortable. When these first four jhanic factors are present, the mind automatically becomes calm and peaceful, able to concentrate on what is happening without getting scattered or dispersed. This one-pointedness of mind is the fifth jhanic factor; ***samadhi*** or concentration.

Access to the first Vipassana jhana requires insight into mind and matter. It is not sufficient to have all five factors present for one to say one has attained the first Vipassana jhana. The mind must also come to penetrate into the Dhamma ***enough to realise the inter-relationship of mind and matter. At this time we say that access to the first Vipassana jhana has occurred.*** A meditator whose mind is composed of these five jhanic factors will experience a new accuracy of mindfulness, a new level of success in sticking with the object. Intense rapture, happiness and comfort in the body may also arise. This could be the occasion for him or her to gloat over the wondrousness of the meditation practice. "Oh, I'm getting really precise and accurate. I even feel like I'm floating in the air!" **You might recognise this reflection as a moment of attachment.** Anyone can get caught up in rapture, happiness and comfort. This attachment to what is happening within us is a manifestation of a special kind of craving, a craving not connected with ordinary, worldly sensual pleasures. Rather, such a craving comes directly out of one's meditation practice. When one is unable to be aware of this craving when it arises, it will interfere with one's practice. Rather than directly noting, one wallows in the pleasant phenomena unmindfully, or thinks about further delights that might ensue from one's practice. This is attachment to the pleasant results of meditation and is known as stopping within.

THREEFOLD SECLUSION

During meditation, one should avoid contact with sensual pleasures and with unwholesome dhammas by practising the threefold seclusion of:

(1) Seclusion of the body (**kaya viveka**); (2) Seclusion of the mind (**citta viveka**) and as a result of the first two; (3) a state where defilement and hindrances are very far away and weak (**vikkhambhana viveka**).

Seclusion of the body actually refers to seclusion not from a physical body, but from the 'body' of objects related to sensual pleasures. This means simply the objects of the senses considered as a group: sounds, visual objects, smells, tastes and tactile objects.

Seclusion from unwholesome dhammas comes under the category of **Seclusion of the Mind** from the various hindrances which obstruct the growth of concentration and insight. In a practical way, Seclusion of the Mind simply means activating mindfulness moment to moment. A meditator who can maintain continuity of mindfulness moment to moment has activated Seclusion of the Mind.

These two types of Seclusions do not come without an effort. For seclusion of the body, we must remove ourselves from an environment of sensual pleasures, taking the opportunity to practise in a place conducive to peace of mind. This removal is not in itself sufficient, of course.

To acquire seclusion of the mind, we become mindful of all objects that arise at the six sense doors. ***One must direct the mind towards an object. The effort to be mindful is instrumental in bringing a sense of accuracy in the mind. This aim, this effort toward accuracy in placing the mind squarely on the meditation object is the first jhanic factor; vitakka. So, we must have aiming. You try to observe the rising and falling of the abdomen. Eventually the mind hits the bull's–eye, clearly noticing sensations of hardness, tension, movements. It begins to impinge and rub against the object. This is vicara.***

After the mind has been rubbing against its object for some time, it will become engrossed and absorbed into it. When you stay with the rise and fall of the abdomen, fewer thoughts arise. You may even go for some time without having a single thought. Clearly, the mind is free from objects of sense pleasure and also from defilement (kilesa) which are caused by these objects.

Seclusion of the body (kaya viveka) and seclusion of the mind (citta viveka) are therefore present. With continued practice, effort and continuity, the defilement will fade into extreme remoteness. At last you have the third type of seclusion, a state where defilement and hindrances are very far away and weak; vikkhambhana viveka.

With a state where defilement and hindrances are very far away and weak (*vikkhambhana viveka*), the mind becomes soft and subtle, light and buoyant, dextrous and flexible; a special kind of happiness, **nekkhamma sukha** arises, the happiness and comfort that come from being free from sensual objects as well as from the unwholesome defilement which react to those objects. So, in place of ordinary apparent happiness, this liberating comfort appears. In relinquishing the comfort of the senses, one gains a very comfortable state of being liberated from the very senses we have relinquished. This is the true renunciation of sense pleasures.

Seclusion of the mind from unwholesome dhammas actually means seclusion of the mind from all defilement. There is no opportunity for defilement to arise because the immediate cause of defilement, namely sense objects, have been given up. Now the word jhana, the state of being absorbed, takes on a whole new meaning. As a result of other jhanic factors of vitakka (aim) and vicara (rubbing); sensual pleasures have been given up and the defilement put away. Not only does jhana allow absorption, but it also removes defilement like fire burning them away.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF VITAKKA AND VICARA

In the development of jhanic states, these two factors, vitaka and vicara are absolutely important. They have a close relationship. Here are two examples. Imagine that you have a brass cup that is covered with dirt and stains. You take brass polish and put it on a rag. Holding the cup in one hand, you use the other hand to rub the rag against its surface. Working diligently and carefully, soon you will have a shiny cup. In the same way, a meditator must hold his or her mind in the particular place where the primary object is occurring, the abdomen. He or she keeps applying mindfulness at that place, rubbing it until the stains and pollution of the kilesa disappear. Then he or she will be able to penetrate into the true nature of what is happening at that spot. He or she will comprehend the process of rising and falling. Of course, when other objects are more prominent than the primary object, a meditator must note them, applying vitakka and vicara toward the new phenomena.

Holding the mug with one hand is analogous to vitakka, while the polishing action is analogous to vicara. Imagine what would happen if this meditator only held on to the mug and did not polish it. It would remain as dirty as before. If he or she tried to polish it without holding it steadily, it would again be impossible to do a good job. This illustrates the interdependency of the two factors. The second example is that of a compass, the kind used in geometry. As you know, a compass has two arms, a pointed one and another which holds the pencil. You must firmly place your mind on the object of meditation, as if your mind were the pointed end of the compass; and then you must rotate the mind, so to speak, until it can see the object as a whole and very clearly. A perfect circle will result. Again, the placing of the pointed end is analogous to vitakka, and the rotation to vicara.

Vicara is translated as 'investigation' or 'sustained thought', which is to say, to apply intellect to seek the whys and wherefores. Unfortunately, this kind of investigation is inappropriate for meditation. Intellectual learning and knowledge is only one of two kinds. The other means of knowledge and learning is direct and intuitive. ***In meditation one examines the ultimate realities or paramattha dhammas, directly. One must actually experience them, without thinking about them. This is the only way to attain insight and wisdom relating to things as they really are, the natural state of affairs.*** One may understand a lot intellectually about ultimate reality. One may have read a great deal, but without experiencing reality directly, there can be no insight. The reason why the samatha jhanas can grant tranquillity, but do not lead directly to wisdom is that they have concepts as their objects, rather than objects which can be directly experienced without thinking. ***Vipassana jhanas lead to wisdom, because they consist of direct, sustained contact with ultimate realities.*** Thinking about the taste of an apple is insufficient to know the taste itself. One can think all one wants, but until one takes a bite of the apple one will not experience the taste of that fruit. So too, with meditation; one may vividly imagine what a certain experience is like, but one have not experienced the real thing until one have actually made the effort to practise correctly.

The darkness of delusion and ignorance arises in the human mind when it is not properly attuned to the object of meditation. This darkness is not empty and uneventful, though. On the contrary, in each moment of ignorance the mind is continually seeking and grasping after desirable sights, sounds, thoughts, smells, tastes and sensations. Beings in this condition spend all their waking hours seeking, grasping and clinging. They are so enmeshed that it is difficult for them to appreciate the possibility of another sort of happiness beyond those sensual pleasures which are so familiar. Meditation, the practical method of achieving a higher happiness, will be unintelligible to them. Vipassana practice is a full and continuous attention to the object. This involves two aspects of concentration, vitakka and vicara: aiming and rubbing. These two jhanic factors keep the mind absorbed in the object of noting. If they are absent, the mind will stray. Bombarded by sense objects and defilement, especially the defilement of longing for sensual objects, the mind will be engulfed by delusion and ignorance. There will be no light, no chance for the remaining three jhanic factors to assemble with the first two to create the environment of peace, clarity and joy where insight blossoms.

THE FIVE HINDRANCES

The five specific ways in which the mind strays from its object are called the Five Hindrances. Of the seemingly endless variety of defilement (kilesa), the hindrances represent the five major types. They are 'hindrances' because each of them has a particular power to obstruct and impede our practice. As long as the mind is seduced by temptations of the senses, it cannot remain steadily observing a meditation object. Drawn away time and again, it will never travel that path of practice which leads beyond ordinary happiness.

Sensual Desire is the first and greatest hindrance to our practice.

For an object to be distracting in an unpleasant way is another frequent occurrence. Upon contact with an unpleasant object, the mind fills with ***Aversion or Anger***. This too leads the mind away from the object and so also away from the direction of true happiness.

At other times alertness and vigilance vanish. The mind becomes drowsy, unworkable and sluggish. Once again, it cannot stay with the object. This is ***Sloth and Torpor***, third on the list of hindrances.

Sometimes the mind becomes very frivolous and dissipated, flirting with one object and then another. This is ***Restlessness and Agitation***. The mind cannot stay one-pointed on its object but is scattered and dissipated, full of memories of past deeds, remorse and regret, worry and agitation.

The fifth and last major hindrance is ***Sceptical Doubt and Criticism***. Surely you have experienced times when you have doubted yourself, the method of practice or your teachers. You may compare this practice to others you have done or heard about, and you become completely paralysed, like a traveller at a crossroad who, unsure of the right way, cannot decide which path to take.

The presence of hindrances means that rapture, comfort, one-pointedness of mind, right aim and continuity are lacking. These five wholesome factors are the factors of the first jhana; they are integral parts of successful Vipassana practice. Each jhanic factor is the antidote for a specific hindrance and each hindrance is the enemy of a jhanic factor.

Concentration: The Antidote for Sense Desire

The hindrance of sense desire is chiefly responsible for keeping us in darkness. Concentration, one-pointedness is its antidote. When your mind is concentrated on the object of meditation, it does not attach itself to other thoughts, nor does it desire pleasant sights and sounds. Pleasurable objects lose their power over the mind. Dispersion and dissipation cannot occur.

Rapture: The Antidote for Aversion

As concentration takes the mind to more levels, deep interest arises. Rapture and joy fill one's being which frees the mind from the second hindrance, for anger cannot co-exist with joy. Hence, joy and rapture are the antidotes to anger.

Happiness or Comfort: The Antidote for Restlessness

When meditation is well developed, a great sense of comfort arises. The mind observes unpleasant sensations peacefully, without aversion. There is ease in the mind, even if the objects are difficult. Sometimes pain even disappears under the influence of mindfulness, leaving behind a sense of physical release. With this physical and mental comfort, the mind is content to remain with the object. It does not fly about. Comfort is the antidote for restlessness and anxiety.

Aim: The Antidote for Sloth and Torpor

Aim has the specific power to open and refresh the mind. It makes the mind alive and open. Hence, when the mind is continually and diligently trying to be accurate in aiming at the object, sloth and torpor do not arise. A mind attacked by drowsiness is a mind that has been constricted and withered. Vitakka is the antidote to sloth and torpor.

Continuous Attention or Rubbing: The Antidote for Doubt

If aim is good, it follows that the mind will hit its target of observation. This impinging or rubbing against the object is the jhanic factor of *vicara*, which has the function of continuity, keeping the mind stuck to its object of observation. Continuous attention is the opposite of doubt, for doubt is indecision. The doubting mind cannot fix itself on any particular object; instead it runs here and there considering possibilities. Obviously, when *vicara* is present the mind cannot slip from the object and behave in this manner. ***Immature wisdom*** also contributes to the spreading of doubt. Without a certain depth and maturity of practice, profound Dhamma will be obscure.

Some beginning meditators tend to wonder about things they have heard about but never experienced; the more they try to think and analyse such things through, the less they will understand; they will be confused. Frustration and continued thinking eventually lead to criticism. For this vicious cycle, continuous attention is again the antidote. A mind firmly stuck to its object uses all its power to observe; it does not generate critical thoughts.

COMPREHENDING THE NATURE OF THIS WORLD

When you can keep your attention on the rising and falling from the very beginning of its occurrence to the very end, developing that penetrative, accurate mindfulness from moment to moment in an unbroken and continuous manner, then you may come to notice that you can see clearly with your mind's eye the entire rising process. From its beginning, through the middle, to the end, there is not a single gap. The experience is utterly clear to you. You now begin to move through the progression of insights that is only available through ***Vipassana meditation, direct observation of mind and body. First you make the subtle distinction between the mental and physical elements constituting the rising and falling processes. Sensations are material objects, distinct from the consciousness that perceives them. As you observe diligently, you begin to see how mind and matter are mutually connected, causally linked. An intention in the mind causes the appearance of a series of physical objects constituting a movement. Your mind starts to appreciate how mind and matter come into being and disappear. The fact of arising and disappearing comes into crystal clear focus. It becomes obvious that all objects in your field of consciousness have the nature to come and go. Sounds begin and then end. Sensations in the body arise and then dissolve; nothing lasts.*** At this point in practice, there begin to be a strong presence of all five factors of the first jhana, discussed above. **Aiming** and **impinging**, **vitakka** and **vicara**, have strengthened. **Concentration, rapture** and **comfort** join them. The first **Vipassana jhana** is said to be complete, and Vipassana-nana or Vipassana insight knowledge begin to arise. Vipassana insight knowledge is concerned specifically with the three general characteristics of conditioned phenomena: ***Impermanence*** (anicca); ***Unsatisfactoriness or Suffering*** (dukkha); And ***Absence of an Abiding Self*** (anatta).

1 - IMPERMANENCE (anicca):
As you watch objects come and go, ***you will begin to appreciate their momentary nature, their impermanence.*** This knowledge of impermanence is direct, first hand; you feel its truth anywhere you place your attention. During the moment your mind is in contact with the object, you see clearly how the object dissolves. A great sense of satisfaction arises. You feel a deep interest in your meditation, and rejoice at having discovered this fact and truth about the universe. Even simple and general observation tells us that the whole body is impermanent. Impermanence or *anicca* refers to the whole body. Looking closer, we see that all phenomena which occur at the six sense doors are impermanent; they are impermanent things. We can also understand impermanence to mean all the impermanent things comprising mind and matter, mental and physical phenomena. There is no object we can find in this conditioned world that is not impermanent (*anicca*). ***The fact of rising and falling away is the characteristic or sign of impermanence*** *(anicca lakkhana)*. ***It is precisely in the arising and passing away that impermanence can be recognised.***

Vipassana Knowledge of Impermanence is the intuitive comprehension which realises the fact of impermanence; it occurs in the very moment of noting a particular object and watching it disappear. It is important to make this point, that ***Vipassana Knowledge of Impermanence*** (*anicca Vipassana nana*) can only occur in the precise moment when one sees the passing away of a phenomenon. In the absence of such immediate seeing, it is impossible to understand impermanence. ***True insight only occurs in the presence of a non-thinking, bare awareness of the passing away of phenomena in the present moment.*** In the moment of rising, you may be aware of tautness, tenseness, expansion and movement. If you can follow the rising process from beginning to end, and the ending of these sensations is clear to you, it is possible for Vipassana knowledge of impermanence (*anicca Vipassana nana*) to occur. All sensations that can be felt at the abdomen or anywhere else are impermanent things (anicca). Their characteristics of having appeared at the beginning of the rising process and having disappeared at the end, constitute characteristic of impermanence (*anicca lakkhana*). The realisation that they are impermanent can only occur in a moment when one is observing their disappearance.

Impermanence can be observed in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, thinking, touching; all the sensations of the body, heat and cold and hardness and pain; and all of one's miscellaneous activities; bending, turning, reaching out, walking; all these things are impermanent. If you can see the vanishing of any of these objects, you will be involved in Vipassana knowledge of impermanence (*anicca Vipassana nana*). You will lose the illusion of permanence. Conceit (*mana*) will also be absent. In fact, during times when you are mindfully aware of impermanence, your general level of conceit will progressively diminish.

2 - SUFFERING OR UNSATISFACTORINESS: (Dukkha)

The second characteristic of conditioned reality is suffering or dukkha. During your observation of impermanence, very naturally the factor of unsatisfactoriness and or suffering will also become apparent as phenomena arise and pass away. You will realise that nothing is dependable and there is nothing fixed to cling to. Everything is in changing all the time. Phenomena provide no refuge. Suffering itself is synonymous for impermanence, referring to all impermanent things.

At this point of development in the practice, painful sensations can become very interesting. One can observe them for some time without reacting. One sees that they are not solid at all; they do not actually last more than the briefest instant. The illusion of continuity begins to crumble. A pain in the back: one sees fiery heat transform itself into pressure, and then into throbbing. The throbbing changes its texture, its shape and intensity moment by moment. Finally, a climax occurs. The mind is able to see the break-up and disintegration of that pain. Pain vanishes from the field of consciousness. Observing the pain disappearing, one is filled with joy and exhilaration. The body feels cool, calm, comfortable, yet one is not deluded into thinking that suffering has been abolished. The satisfying nature of sensations becomes clearer. One begins to see this body as a mass of painful and unsatisfactory phenomena. The characteristic of suffering is stress by impermanence. Precisely because all objects arise and pass away from moment to moment, we live in a highly stressful situation. Once arising has occurred, there is no way to prevent passing away.

Vipassana knowledge of suffering, the insight that comprehends suffering, also occurs at the moment when one is contemplating the passing away of phenomena. However, it has a different flavour from Vipassana knowledge of impermanence. One is suddenly seized by a great realisation that none of these objects is dependable.

There is no refuge in them; they are fearsome things. Again it is important to understand that the appreciation of suffering we gain through reading books, or through our own reasoning and reflection, does not constitute the real thing. Vipassana knowledge of suffering only occurs when the mind is present with bare awareness, watching the arising and passing away of phenomena and understanding that their impermanence is fearful, fearsome, undesirable and bad. ***The true realisation that suffering is inherent in all phenomena can be very powerful. It eliminates the deluded view that these things are pleasurable. When such an illusion vanishes, craving cannot arise.***

3 - ABSENCE OF AN ABIDING SELF (anatta):
In view of this, one appreciates that no 'entity' or a 'self' (**anatta**) is behind these processes; only moment to moment phenomena arises; this is a natural process with which a 'self', is not identified. This wisdom relating to the absence of a 'self' in things; **Vipassana knowledge of selflessness** (anatta Vipassana nana), is also based on two preceding aspects, selflessness (anatta) and characteristic of selflessness (anatta lakkhana).

Selflessness (anatta) refers to all impermanent phenomena which possess no self-essence; in other words, every single element of mind and matter. The only difference from **impermanence** (anicca) and **suffering** (dukkha) is that a different aspect, the third characteristic of existence, **selflessness**, is being highlighted. The characteristic of selflessness (anatta), sign of selflessness (anatta lakkhana), is seeing that an object does not arise or pass away according to one's wishes. All the mental and physical phenomena that occur in us come and go of their own accord, responding to their own natural laws. Their occurrence is beyond our control. We can see this in a general way by observing the weather. At times it is extremely hot, at other times freezing cold. At times it is wet, at other times dry. Some climates are fickle, such that one does not know what will happen next. In no way can one adjust the temperature to suit one's comfort. Weather is subject to its own natural laws, just like the elements that constitute our minds and bodies. When we fall ill, suffer and eventually die.

While diligently observing and noting all the mental and physical phenomena arising and passing away within, one may be struck by the fact that no one is in control of the process. Such an insight comes quite naturally. It is not affected or manipulated in any way. Nor does it come from reflection.

It simply occurs when one is present, observing the passing away of phenomena. This is Vipassana knowledge of selflessness or **anatta Vipassana nana.** When one is unable to see the momentary arising and passing away of phenomena, one is easily misled to think that there is a self, an individual unchanging entity behind the process of body and mind. With clear awareness, this false view is momentarily eliminated.

VERIFIED KNOWLEDGE BY COMPREHENSION: THE FULFILLMENT OF THE FIRST VIPASSANA JHANA

When awareness is clear, especially when the passing away of things is noticeable, one can appreciate intuitively the characteristics of impermanence, of suffering, or of absence of self that are inherent in all phenomena. The intuitive understanding of all three of these characteristics is included in a particular stage of insight, '***Verified Knowledge by Comprehension***' (**sammasana-nana**), meaning the insight that arises out of verification. One comprehends or verifies the three characteristics through personal experience of seeing the disappearance of phenomena.

Though it is very commonly used, the word 'insight' may not be an appropriate translation of the Pali word Vipassana. The word has two parts, 'vi' and 'passana'. 'Vi' refers to various modes and 'passana' is seeing. Therefore, one meaning of Vipassana is 'seeing through various modes'. These various modes, of course are those of impermanence, suffering and absence of self. A more complete translation now becomes 'seeing through the modes of impermanence, suffering and absence of self'. Another synonym for Vipassana insight is pacceka-nana. Pacceka here refers to direct experiential perception. True Vipassana insight only arises when one is mindful, as it occurs intuitively rather than from reasoning, it is called a direct experiential insight, pacceka-nana.

With heightened Vipassana insight as one's practice intensifies, the mind is led into a natural and spontaneous reflection that impermanence, suffering and non-selfness are not only manifest in the present situation; one realises by deduction that these three qualities have also manifested throughout the past and will continue to prevail in the future. Other beings and objects are constituted of the same elements as oneself, all impermanent, unsatisfactory and empty of self. This reflection is called deductive knowledge, and it is a further aspect of the jhanic factors of vitakka and vicara, manifesting in this case on the thinking level.

At this stage the first Vipassana jhana is considered to be fully developed and the stage of practice called ***'Verified Knowledge by Comprehension'*** (**sammasana-nana**) is fulfilled. One has a deep and clear appreciation of the three general characteristics of conditioned phenomena: anicca, dukkha and anatta. ***One has reached the deductive conclusion that in this world there never has been, or will there ever be, a situation that is not pervaded by these three aspects. Deductions and reflections tend to be present in the first Vipassana jhana. They are harmless unless they begin to take over one's mind, especially in a person who is highly intellectual, who has a vivid imagination or is philosophically bent, too much reflection can get in the way of personal and direct experience. It can actually put a stop to insight.*** If one has this tendency and finds one's practice undermined, one can console oneself with the knowledge that this is not wrong thinking. In this instance, reflection is connected with the Dhamma rather than with greed or aversion. Despite this fact, of course, ***one should make the effort to return to bare observation, simply experiencing phenomena.***

WHOLESOME AND UNWHOLESOME VITAKKA

The word vitakka, used for the jhanic factor of accurate aim, includes this reflection on a thinking level, directing one's attention toward a thought. There are wholesome and unwholesome kinds of vitakka. Directing one's attention toward sense pleasure is said to be unwholesome vitakka. It may be directed to cruel thought. A cruel thought contains the desire to harm, oppress, torture or torment or kill other beings. It is another very destructive quality of the mind rooted in hatred. Its wholesome counterpart is vitakka connected with renunciation. Vitakka connected with aversion and aggression is unwholesome. Vitakka connected with non-aversion and with non-violence is wholesome. When deductive knowledge of anicca, dukkha and anatta arises as explained above, the vitakka connected with sensual pleasures is absent. In the series of thoughts that come out of direct personal insight, some desire may be present, but it probably will not be concerned with the pleasures of this world; fame, sex, wealth, property. More likely one will feel a very wholesome desire to renounce the world or to be generous to spread the Dhamma. Though these thoughts constitute vitakka or reflection, they are connected with non-greed or renunciation. Vitakka connected with anger is an aggressive state of mind, in which one desires that another person suffer harm and misfortune. Rooted in anger, it has a destructive quality behind it.

Non-aversion or non-hatred refers to the lovely quality of metta, loving kindness. In contrast to the aggressive, destructive quality of hatred, metta wishes the welfare and happiness of others. When one has tasted the flavour of the Dhamma through personal experiences as mentioned above, it is not unusual to want to share it with loved ones. You want others to have the same experience. This kind of thought is connected with metta, for it wishes the well-being of others. It also have the quality of compassion or ***karuna***, wanting to help others and to relieve them of any suffering or distress they may feel. One who has strong compassion will not only feel it emotionally, but will also seek ways and means to relieve the sufferings of others.

VICARA AS REFLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

If such reflective thoughts recur again and again, this process takes the name of vicara. This is the same word used for the more sustained, rubbing aspect of focussed attention. Here it means repeated reflection on the thinking level. First one experiences a direct intuitive insight; and afterwards, deductive knowledge arises concerning the insight. Deductive knowledge is spicy and enjoyable, but in excess it develops into long trains of thoughts which interrupt the process of direct observation. These may be very noble thoughts; of renunciation, metta and compassion, but nonetheless one is caught by them and carried away. At this time insight cannot occur.

THE SECOND VIPASSANA JHANA

The first Vipassana jhana operates up to the point where a meditator attains the insight into rapid arising and passing away of phenomena. Experiencing this insight and going beyond it, a meditator grows up, as it were. He or she leaves behind the childhood of reflective thinking and enters the maturity of simple bare attention. Now the meditator's mind becomes lucid and sharp. He or she is able to follow the very fast rate at which phenomena appear and disappear from moment to moment. Because of the continuity and sharpness of mindfulness, there is little discursive thinking. Nor is there doubt about the impermanent, momentary nature of mind and matter. At this time, the practice seems effortless. In the absence of effortful application and reflective thought, there is space for joy and rapture. This non-thinking, bare attention is the ***Second Vipassana Jhana. In the First Vipassana Jhana, then, the mind is congested with effort and discursive thinking. It is only when the Second Vipassana Jhana arises at the beginning of insight into the arising and passing away of phenomena that clarity, rapture, faith and great comfort begin to predominate.***

THE DANGER OF FAITH, CALM, RAPTURE AND HAPPINESS

The mind is able to become more precise and concentration deepens. This deepened concentration leads to the clear, verified faith that arises from personal experiences. It also brings believing faith, faith that if one continues the practice one will gain the benefits promised by the Blessed One and by one's teacher. Rapture, mental and physical comfort has the tendency to become strong at this stage. When meditators attain the **Second Vipassana Jhana** there is a strong likelihood that they will become attached to these extraordinarily pleasant states of the mind. They experience the deepest happiness of their lives. Some may even believe they have become enlightened. In such a case, the prospect of further progress grows dim. Meditators will have done what the Buddha called 'stopping within'.

If you have extraordinary experiences, please make it a point to note and label them. Be clearly aware that rapture, faith, tranquillity and so forth are no more than mental states. ***If while noting them you realise that you are attached to them, cut the attachment immediately and return your attention to the primary object at the abdomen.*** Only then will your progress continue and it will bring you even sweeter fruit. Meditation teachers have to be tactful in dealing with students who are in this stage of practice. The students are so excited by their experiences that they tend to rebel if the teacher is too deflating. Paying heed to instructions, the meditator returns to sitting and carefully notes the lights, faith, rapture, happiness, tranquillity and comfort. It dawns on him or her that this simple noting actually is the correct path of practice. Thus re-oriented, he or she can proceed with great confidence.

THE ARISING OF THE THIRD VIPASSANA JHANA

Rapture will gradually fade, but mindfulness and concentration will continue to deepen. Then insight into the true nature of what is happening will become very strong. At this point, the enlightenment factors of upekkha, equanimity, becomes predominant. The mind remains unshaken by pleasant objects as well as unpleasant ones and a deep sense of comfort arises in the body and mind. Meditators can sit for long hours without pain and their bodies become pure, light and robust. This is the ***Third Vipassana Jhana,*** whose two jhanic factors are comfort and one-pointedness of mind. The third jhana arises at a more mature stage of the insight into arising and passing away. The transition from the second to the third jhana is a critical turning point in the practice. Human beings have a natural attachment to thrills and excitement which agitate the mind.

THE CLIMAX OF HAPPINESS AND DISSOLUTION OF PHENOMENA

Rapture is one of these agitating pleasures; it creates ripples in the mind. It is rather adolescent; so when you experience it, be certain to increase your vigilance and note as meticulously. As long as a meditator remains attached to rapture, he or she will not move forward to the more mature, subtle happiness that comes with peace and comfort. The happiness or comfort in this third Vipassana jhana is the peak or climax of happiness that experienced in Vipassana. Nevertheless, the meditator can dwell in it with equanimity and without attachment. To continue noting precisely remains crucial, lest the comforts of mind and body, the sharpness and clarity of insight, give rise to a subtle attachment. If your insight is good, sharp and clear, you should note this. Attachment is less likely to arise, since a comprehensive, panoramic mindfulness is present which notes each object easily without slipping.

The Third Jhana is called the climax of happiness because there is no more happiness in the next jhana. As you note phenomena, you will gradually pass beyond the stage of insight into arising and passing away into the stage of dissolution of phenomena. At this point the beginnings and the middles of objects are no longer clear. Instead the mind perceives continuous dissolution of phenomena, which disappear as soon as they are noted. Often it seems as if there is no body at all, only bare phenomena dissolving away continuously. Meditators tend to get distraught and upset, not only because they feel a lack of comfort, but also because the rapid disappearance of phenomena can be quite disconcerting. Before you can note an object, it is gone; the next behaves in the same way; concepts become indistinct. Up to now, meditator may have seen phenomena clearly, but the mental factor of perception, or recognition was still mixed in; hence, he or she was able to see both the ultimate, non-conceptual reality of objects and also the concept of form: body, arm, leg, head, abdomen, and so forth. At the dissolution stage of insight, concepts fall away. It will be difficult to tell where the phenomena are located; there is only disappearance. “What happened?” you may cry. “I was doing so well, and now my practice is falling apart. It is out of control. I can’t note a single thing.” Self judgement, dissatisfaction fills your mind and there is discomfort. Eventually it is possible to gain ease in this new space. You can just coolly settle back and watch the continual flow of phenomena. This stage is ***‘Insight into Dissolution of Phenomena’***. There is no more physical or mental happiness or ease, nor are there out right discomforts or pains in the body at this time. The feeling in the mind is rather neutral too.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE FOURTH VIPASSANA JHANA

During the maturation of insight into arising and passing away of phenomena, the rapture of the second jhana gave way to the third jhana factor of comfort. The outrageous pleasure of rapture was replaced by milder and subtler feelings of comfort and peace. As comfort disappears in the dissolution stage of insight, it still does not incur mental displeasure. Now the third jhana gives way to the fourth jhana, whose characteristics jhana factors are equanimity and one-pointedness of mind. With a mind that is neither pleased nor displeased, comfort nor uncomfortable; upekkha or equanimity arises. Upekkha has a tremendous power to balance the mind. In this particular aspect, it is known as **tatra majjhattatta.** In this environment of balance, mindfulness can become perfectly pure, keen and sharp. Subtle aspects of phenomena can be seen with incredible and uninterrupted clarity as particles and tiny vibrations. In fact, tatra majjhattatta is present in each of the jhanas from the beginning. Yet in the first, second and third jhanas, it is hidden by more assertive qualities, like the moon in daylight which cannot compete with the sun.

SUMMARY OF THE FOUR VIPASSANA JHANAS

In the first jhana, balance is quite undeveloped. Predominantly instead are vitakka and vicara, (aiming and rubbing) or initial application and sustained application. As discussed above, the vitakka and vicara of the first jhana often include large amounts of discursive thinking. In the second jhana, the thrills and chills of rapture overshadow equanimity. Come the third jhana, there is the sweetest happiness and comfort, so that balance has no chance to show itself. When comfort evaporates, however, bringing about that feeling which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, then balance has a chance to shine. In just this way, when dusk sets in and darkness begins to thicken, the moon reigns splendidly over all the sky. After the insight into dissolution come successive insights into fear, disgust and wanting to be liberated. Equanimity is not strongly shown until the stage of insight known as ‘equanimity regarding all formations’. This is a deep level of practice where things begin to move very smoothly.

Mindfulness is so agile now that it picks up the objects before the mind can begin to be perturbed by pleasantness or unpleasantness. There is no chance for attachment or aversion to arise. Objects which normally are very unpleasant lose their influence completely as do thrilling and exciting objects. Because this is true at all six sense doors, the kind of equanimity now present is known as ‘six-limbed equanimity’.

A great subtlety of awareness is another feature of this time in practice. The rising and falling process becomes a vibration. It breaks into particles and may eventually disappear. If this happens, you should try to look at the sitting posture as a whole and perhaps some touch points such as buttocks and knees. These, too may disappear, leaving behind no perception of the body whatsoever. Sickness and pains disappear, for no physical phenomena remain to be perceived, no itches left to scratch. What remains is only the consciousness which knows the absence of physical phenomena. At such a time, this consciousness itself should be taken as the object of knowing. As you note; 'knowing, knowing', even that consciousness can begin to flicker and reappear. Yet, at the same time, there will be clarity of mind and extreme sharpness. This state of extreme mental balance is said to be like the mind of an arahant, which remains unshakable in the face of any object capable of arising in the field of consciousness. However, even if you have attained this stage of practice, you still are not an arahant. You are only experiencing a mind similar to an arahant's during this particular moment of mindfulness.

Each of the four Vipassana jhanas is characterised by a distinct type of happiness. In the first Vipassana jhana, one can experience the happiness of seclusion. The hindrances are kept away and so the mind is remote and secluded from them. In the second jhana, one experiences the happiness of concentration. Good concentration brings happiness in the form of rapture and comfort. As rapture is abandoned, the happiness of the third jhana is simply known as the happiness of comfort. Finally in the fourth jhana, we experience the happiness of wisdom. The fourth type is the best happiness of course. Like the first three, however, it still occurs in the realm of conditioned phenomena. Only if the meditator transcends this realm can he or she experience the ultimate happiness, the happiness of real peace. This is called santisukha in pali. It occurs when the objects of meditation and all other mental and physical phenomena as well as the noting mind itself come to a complete stop.

BOOK IV
THE PROGRESS OF INSIGHT

A Mahasi Discourse

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PREAMBLE

A strict moral discipline must be kept to make progress in meditation (*especially when the goal is Nibbana*.) Although this account of morality listed below is not found until well after the Buddha's time, it is not out of keeping with the spirit of His Teachings and can well be made use of as a guide to practice. The meditator should grasp this spirit of moral discipline.

In the case of the Seven Purifications, the purity implied is reckoned in terms of the elimination of the unwholesome factors opposed to each purification.

SEVEN PURIFICATIONS: A MENU

Purification of Virtue implies the purity obtained through abstinence from bodily and verbal misconduct and wrong livelihood.

Purification of Mind is the purity resulting from cleansing the mind of attachment, aversion, inertia, restlessness and conflict; securing it against their influx.

Puritification of View is brought about by dispelling the distortions of wrong views.

Purification by Overcoming Doubt is purity through the conquest of all doubts concerning the pattern of samsaric existence.

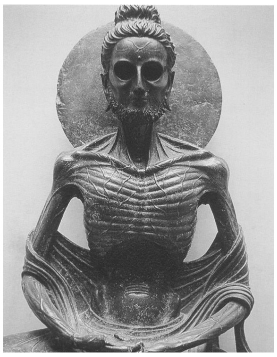
Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What is Path and Not Path signifies the purity attained by passing beyond the alluring distractions which arise in the course of Insight Meditation.

Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way is purity resulting from the temporary removal of defilement which obstructs the path of practice, and lastly,

Purification by Knowledge and Vision is the purity gained by eradicating defilement together with their underlying tendencies by means of the Supramundane Paths; consisting of the Knowledge of the Four Paths; the Paths of Stream Entry, of Once-returning, of Non-returning and of Arahantship.

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMA SAMBUDDHASSA
Homage to Him, the Exalted One, the Worthy One, the Supremely Self-Enlightened One

THE PROGRESS OF INSIGHT



INTRODUCTION by Nyanaponika Thera

The framework of the Progress of Insight is the **"Seven Stages of Purification"** ***(Satta-Visuddhi)***. On gradually reaching advanced stages, in the meditational practice, various phases of Insight Knowledge ***(ñana)*** are developed, leading to ultimate liberation. The approach is that of "bare insight" where, by direct observation, one's own body and mental processes are seen with increasing clarity as being impermanent, liable to suffering, and without a self or soul. The practice begins and continues with a few, selected subjects of body-contemplation. With the gradually increasing strength of mindfulness and concentration, the range widens and the vision deepens until Insight Knowledge unfolds in due order, as a natural outcome of the practice. ***This approach to the practice of Vipassana meditation is known as bare insight because insight into the three characteristics of existence is made use of exclusively, dispensing with the prior development of full concentrative absorption*** (jhana). Nevertheless, a high degree of mental concentration is required for perseverance in the practice, for attaining Insight Knowledge, and for reaping its fruits. The foremost concern here is with the emerging stages of Knowledge in the Progress of Insight, together with the corresponding **Stages of Purification**, ...leading to the attainment of Arahantship.

It has been written in brief for the benefit of meditators who have obtained distinctive results in their practice, so that they may more easily understand their experiences; and for those who, in their practice of Insight, have taken up as their main subject either the tactile body process of motion*, evident in the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, or the tactile body process based on three of the primary elements of matter evident in the sensation of touch (body impact).

[* "Motion" (vayo, lit. wind, air) refers to the last of the four material elements (dhatu), or primary qualities of matter. The other three are: earth (solidity, hardness), water (adhesion), and fire (temperature). These four elements, always in varying proportional strength, are present in all forms of matter. The "inner wind element" which applies in this context is active in the body as motion, vibration and pressure manifesting itself in the passage of air through the body (e.g. in breathing), in the movement and pressure of limbs and organs, and so on. It becomes perceptible as a tactile process, or object of touch through the pressure caused by it.]

It is also meant for those who, by attending to these exercises, have gained Progressive Insights as well into the whole body-and-mind process arising at the Six Sense Doors, and have finally come to see the Dhamma, to attain to the Dhamma, to understand the Dhamma, to penetrate the Dhamma, who have passed beyond doubt, freed themselves from uncertainty, obtained assurance, and achieved independence [*refers to those individuals who have attained to the first supramundane stage on the road to Arahantship, that of stream entry, sotapatti] of others in the Master's Dispensation.

Nyanaponika Thera

THE PROGRESS OF INSIGHT

I. PURIFICATION OF CONDUCT (Silavisudhi)

Like any other tree, the great tree of the meditative life requires roots. The roots of the meditative life are ***Purification of Conduct (Virtue)*** and ***Purification of Mind.*** Unless these two roots are nourished, there will be no progress in meditation. The first and most fundamental of the roots is ***Purification of Virtue,*** which requires the understanding and maintaining of four types of restraint:

1. observing the precepts one has undertaken and protecting them like ones life, (for monks/nuns as well as for the laity)
2. guarding the six sense-doors restraining defilement from arising,
3. maintaining a righteous livelihood and
4. making use of one's requisite of life with mindfulness and wise reflection.

A meditator who lives according to these four ways of restraint will find nothing to get attached to or resent. The meditator then, is one who has a "light" livelihood, being light in body and content at heart, free from burdens of ownership as regards anything anywhere. Though these four principles were originally prescribed for monks and nuns; lay meditators should adapt them to their own situation. Everyone must have a standard of virtuous conduct dedicated to *Nibbana (see Appendix). The standard is relative to his or her status in life. Monks and nuns are expected to observe the precepts of training given in the two codes of moral discipline making up their respective rules (Patimokkhas). Male and female lay-devotees have five precepts as **a constant standard of virtuous conduct in their everyday life.** If they are more enthusiastic, they can observe the eight or ten precepts as a daily practice, or special observance during other significant days. Before one can establish oneself firmly in virtuous conduct, one must understand its significance well. Normally one protects one's conduct impelled by conscience and shame (***hiri*** and ***ottappa***). A wise man however observes virtuous conduct purely with the aim of attaining Nibbana. This conduct of restraint consists in mindfully guarding the Six Sense Doors, that is, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. By means of mindfulness, one can prevent the arising of defilement sparked off by sense experiences. All forms of desires, major and minor conflicts, as well as those deceptions which are extremely subtle, rooted in delusion itself and in pure and simple ignorance can be arrested by mindful noting.

Deceptions and delusions are difficult to fathom. But if one mindfully makes a mental note of every object “calling” at the Six Sense Doors, one can free oneself from deception. ***By failing to make a mental note of a pleasant feeling, one provides an opportunity for unwholesome thoughts to arise.*** Failing to make a mental note of an unpleasant feeling can be an opportunity for the arising of repugnance, while such a failure in regard to a neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling might give rise to deception, delusion or ignorance. ***‘Not knowing’ and ‘Misconceiving’ of what should be known amounts to Delusion. Therefore the practice of mentally noting each and every object that calls at the six sense doors will also be helpful in getting rid of the underlying tendency to ignorance.***

When **PURIFICATION OF CONDUCT** has been established, the meditator who has chosen Pure Insight as his vehicle should endeavour to contemplate body and mind (nama-rupa). In doing so, he should contemplate, (according to their characteristics), the Five Groups of Grasping, that is, the body and mental processes that become evident to him at his own Six Sense Doors.

Insight must be developed by noting, according to their specific and general characteristics*, the body and mental processes that become evident at the Six Sense Doors. [*Things in their true nature have two characteristics or marks: specific characteristics and general characteristics. The understanding of the specific characteristics is knowledge by experience, while the understanding of the general characteristics is knowledge by inference. The specific characteristic, for instance, of the element of motion is its nature of supporting, its function of moving; its general characteristics are impermanence, dis-ease and a non-self or non ego identity.] At the beginning of the practice, however, it is difficult to follow and to note clearly all body and mental processes that incessantly appear at the Six Sense Doors. The meditator should first note the perfectly distinct process of touch, perceived through the door of body sensitivity; as in Insight Meditation one should note what is distinct and prominent. When sitting, there occurs the body process of touch by way of the sitting posture and through touch sensitivity in the body. These processes of tactile sensitivity should be noted as "sitting... touching...”, and so forth, in due succession. Further, at the seated meditator's abdomen, the tactile process of body motion (that is, the wind, or vibratory element) which has breathing as its condition, is perceptible continuously as the rise (expansion) and fall (contraction) of the abdomen.

That, too, should be noted as "rising, falling," and so forth. While the meditator is thus engaged in noting the element of motion which impinges continuously on the door of body sensitivity in the abdomen, it becomes evident to him in its aspects of stiffening, of vibrating, and of pushing and pulling. Here;

- the aspect of stiffening shows the motion element's ***characteristic nature*** of supporting;
- the aspect of vibrating shows its ***essential function*** of movement; and
- the aspect of pushing and pulling shows its ***manifestation*** of impelling.

Hence, the meditator, noting the tactile body process of rise and fall of the abdomen, accomplishes the observation of the *body process (rupa)*, by getting to know the characteristic nature, etc., of the element of motion. Later when he has accomplished the observation of mind *(nama)* and the observation of both *body and mind (nama-rupa)*, he will also come to know the ***general characteristics*** of the processes concerned;

(a) *their* ***impermanence,*** **(b)** *their liability to* ***suffering,*** **and**
(c) *their being void of* ***a self.***

But while he is engaged in just noting the rising and falling of the abdomen and other tactile processes, there will appear thoughts of desire, etc., feelings of pleasure, etc., or acts such as adjusting various parts of the body. At that time, these activities (of mind and body) must be noted, too. After noting them, he should turn again to the continuous noting of the rising and falling of the abdomen, which is the basic object of mindfulness in this practice.

II. PURIFICATION OF MIND (*Citta-Visuddhi*)

During the early part of the methodical practice, as long as the meditator's mind is not yet fully purified, wandering thoughts of objects of sense desire, etc., will appear intermittently whilst mindfully noting the rise and fall of the abdomen. Sometimes the beginner will perceive occurrence of these interruptions, and sometimes not. But even if he perceives them, it will be only after a short time has elapsed after their appearance. These are "hindering thoughts." As the Momentary Concentration of his mind is still very tender and weak, these wandering thoughts continue to hinder his mind while it is occupied in developing the practice of mindful noting.

When, however, the Momentary Concentration of his mind have improved and developed intensity, the thought process of Noting becomes well concentrated. Hence, when attending to the objects to be noted, his noting thoughts now appear as if falling upon these objects, as if striking at them, as if confronting them again and again. Then, as a rule, his mind will no longer go elsewhere. Only occasionally, and in a slight degree, will this happen, and even in these cases he will be able to note any such stray thought at its very arising, as expressed in common speech; or, to be exact, he will note the stray thought immediately after its actual arising. Then that stray thought will subside as soon as it is noted and will not arise again. Immediately afterwards he will also be able to resume continuous noting of any object as it becomes evident to him. At this stage, his mind is "unhindered."

While the meditator is noting with unhindered mind, the noting mind will close in upon and fix on whatever object is being noted, and the act of noting will proceed without break, and there will arise in him an uninterrupted succession "the concentration of mind lasting for a moment," directed to each object noted. This "concentration of mind lasting for a minute", is **Purification of Mind.** This refers to mental concentration of either of two degrees of intensity: full or access concentration. In both concentration, the mind is **temporarily** purified from the five mental hindrances, which defile the mind and obstruct concentration. Though that concentration has only momentary duration, its power of resistance to being overwhelmed by opposition corresponds to that of access concentration. 'Momentary unification of mind' means the concentration of mind lasting only for a moment which fixes the mind immovably on its respective object in a single mode and is not overcome by opposition. "Immovably with its respective object" refers to the uninterrupted continuity of the thoughts engaged in noting; after noting one object, one attends, in the same manner of concentration, to another that follows immediately; again, having noted that object, one turns to the next one, and so on. "In a single mode" means: though the objects to be noted, as they present themselves, are numerous and varied, yet the force of concentration of the mind uninterruptedly engaged in noting remains virtually on the same level. For what is meant here is: just as the first object was noted with a certain degree of concentration, so the second, third, and other subsequent objects are noted in each case with the same degree of concentration.

"Is not overcome by opposition": this means that the momentary concentration in its uninterrupted flow is not overwhelmed by the mental hindrances; as it is not being overwhelmed, it is pure.

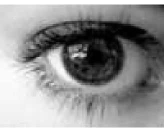
[A Note from Bhikkhu Bodhi: Purification of mind as understood in the Buddha's teaching is the sustained endeavor to cleanse the mind of defilement, those dark unwholesome mental forces which run beneath the surface stream of consciousness vitiating our thinking, values, attitudes, and actions. The chief among the defilement are the three that the Buddha has termed the "roots of evil"; greed, hatred, and delusion, from which emerge their numerous offshoots and variants; anger and cruelty, avarice and envy, conceit and arrogance, hypocrisy and vanity, the multitude of erroneous views. However, in the Buddha's teaching the criterion of Enlightenment lies in purity of mind. The purpose of all insight is to liberate the mind from the defilement, and Nibbana itself, the goal of the teaching, is defined quite clearly as freedom from greed, hatred and delusion. The defilement, the Buddha declares, lie at the bottom of all human suffering. Burning within as lust and craving, as rage and resentment, they lay to waste hearts, lives, hopes, and civilisations, and drive us blind and thirsty through the round of birth and death. The Buddha describes the defilement as bonds, fetters, hindrances, and knots; thence the path to unbonding, release, and liberation, to untying the knots, is at the same time a discipline aimed at inward cleansing. The work of purification must be undertaken in the same place where the defilement arise, in the mind itself, and the main method the Dhamma offers for purifying the mind is meditation].

III. PURIFICATION OF VIEW (Ditthi-Visuddhi)

1. Analytical Knowledge of Mind and Matter (nama rupa pariccheda nana)

Endowed with **PURIFICATION OF MIND** and continuing the practice of noting, the meditator now comes to know mind and matter analytically as follows: ***"The rising (upward movement) of the abdomen is one process; the falling (downward movement) is another; sitting is another; touching is another, etc."*** In this way he comes to know how to distinguish each body process that he notes. He realises: ***"The knowing of the rising movement is one process; the knowing of the falling movement is another."*** In this way he comes to know each mental act of noting. He realises: ***"The rising movement is one process; the knowing of it is another. The falling movement is one process; the knowing of it is another,"*** and so on.

In that way he comes to know how to distinguish each Body and Mental process. All that knowledge comes from simply noting, not from reasoning; that is to say, it is knowledge by Direct Experience arrived at by the mere act of noting, and not knowledge derived from logical deductions. Hence, when seeing a visual object with the eye, the meditator knows how to distinguish each single factor involved:



"The eye is one;
the visual object is another;
seeing is another,
and knowing it is another."

The same manner applies in the case of the other sense functions. In each act of noting, the meditator comes to know analytically ***the mental processes*** of noting, and those of thinking and reflecting, knowing them for himself through direct knowledge of his experience thus: ***'They have the nature of going towards an object, inclining towards an object, cognising an object'.*** On the other hand, he knows analytically ***the material processes*** going on in the whole body, which are here described as "the rising and falling movements of the abdomen," "sitting," etc..; knowing them thus: ***'These Do Not have the nature of going or inclining towards an object, or of cognising an object'.*** Such knowing is called, "knowing matter (or body) by its manifestation of non-determining." 'Non-determining' (as in the passage quoted) should be understood as having no faculty of cognising an object." Such knowledge as this, which analyses each act of noting both the body process and the mental process engaged in noting, according to their true essential nature, is: ***Analytical Knowledge of Mind and Matter.***

When that knowledge has come to maturity, the meditator realises that: 'At the moment of breathing in: There is just the rising movement of the abdomen and the knowing of the movement, there is No Self involved'. 'At the moment of breathing out: There is just the falling movement of the abdomen and the knowing of the movement, there is No Self involved''. Understanding it in these and other instances, he knows and sees for himself by noting: ***'There is here only this pair: A Material process as Object, and A Mental process of Knowing. It is to this pair alone that the terms of conventional usage; 'being ', 'person', or 'soul', 'I' or 'another', 'man' or 'woman' refers. Apart from That Dual Process there is No Separate Person or Being, I, Another, Man or Woman'. This Is Purification of View.***

IV. PURIFICATION BY OVERCOMING DOUBT (Kankha vitarana Visuddhi)

2. Knowledge by Discerning Conditionality (paccaya pariggaha nana).

When **PURIFICATION OF VIEW** has come to maturity, the conditions necessary for the body and mental processes observed will also become evident. Firstly, the consciousness that conditions the (respective) body process will be evident. ***As in bending the arms or legs, the consciousness of the intention to bend these limbs is evident.*** Next the meditator notes the act of bending, and so on. Then he understands by direct experience, ***'When there is a Conscious Intention to bend a limb the body process of bending arises. Similarly, when there is a conscious intention to stretch a limb the body process_of stretching arises.'***

In the same way he understands other instances, too by direct experience. He also understands by direct experience the condition for the mental process, in the following manner: In the case of a conscious desire to stray, there arises first a corresponding consciousness giving initial attention (to the distracting object). If that consciousness is not noted (with mindfulness), then there arises a consciousness that strays. But if the consciousness of initial attention to the distracting object is noted and known, no stray thoughts will arise. It is similar in the case of other types of consciousness, for instance: when taking delight or being angry, greedy, etc. *When the eye and a visual object are present, there arises* visual consciousness. Otherwise visual consciousness will not arise. So it is in the case of the other sense doors. If there is a recognisable object, then there arises consciousness engaged in noting, thinking, reasoning or understanding, as the case may be; otherwise no such consciousness arises. Similarly, the meditator understands occurrences concerning other mind-door cognition. During such processes, the meditator will generally experience many different feelings arising in his body. While one of these feelings is being noted (but without concern), another feeling will arise elsewhere, and while that is being noted, again another will appear elsewhere. Thus the meditator follows each feeling as it arises and notes it. But though he is engaged in noting these feelings as they arise, he will only perceive their initial phase of "arising" and not their final phase of "dissolution."

At this stage, mental images such as, a monk, a man, a house, a tree, a park, a heavenly mansion, clouds and others may appear. While the meditator is still engaged in noting one of these mental images, another will show itself; while still noting that, yet another will appear.

As they arise, he goes on noting them. But though he is engaged in noting them, he will perceive only their initial phase, not the final phase. He now understands: ***'Consciousness arises in accordance with each object that becomes evident. If there is an object, there arises consciousness; if there is no object, no consciousness will arise.'*** Between sequences of noting he also, by considering inferentially, comes to know: 'It is due to the presence of such causes and conditions as ignorance, craving, kamma, etc., that body-and-mind continue.' Such discernment through direct experience and through inference as described, when noting body-and-mind with their conditions, is: ***Knowledge of Discerning Conditionality.***

When that knowledge has come to maturity, the meditator perceives only body and mind processes occurring in strict accordance with their particular and appropriate conditions and he comes to the conclusion: ***'Here is only a conditioning body and mind process and a conditioned body and mind process. Apart from these, there is no person who performs the bending of the limbs, etc., or who experiences feelings of pain, etc.' This is Purification of Insight by Overcoming Doubt.***

3. Knowledge by Comprehension (sammasana-nana)

When "**Purification of Insight By Overcoming Doubt**" has reached maturity; the meditator will discern distinctly: ***The Initial, Middle and Final phases of any object noted by him.*** Then, in the case of various objects noted, he will discern distinctly that: ***Only after each earlier process has ceased, does there arise a subsequent process.*** For instance, only when the rising movement of the abdomen has come to an end, does there arise the falling movement; only when that has ended, is there again a rising movement. So also in the case of walking, only when the lifting of the foot has come to an end, does there arise the carrying forward of the foot; only when that has been completed, does there follow the placing of the foot on the ground. In the case of painful feelings, only after each single feeling occurring at its particular place has ceased, will another new feeling arise at another place. On noting the painful feeling repeatedly, the meditator will see that it gradually grows less, and at last ceases entirely. In the case of the various shaped images that enter the mind's field, ***it is only after each single image noted has vanished, that another new object will come into the mind's focus.***

On noting them attentively twice, thrice or more, he will see that these mental objects which are being noted move from one place to another, or they become gradually smaller and less distinct, until at last they disappear entirely. ***The meditator does not perceive anything that is permanent and lasting, or free from destruction and disappearance. Seeing how objects, even while being noted, are subject to destruction and disappearance, the meditator comprehends impermanence.*** He further comprehends ***suffering*** (pain) in the objects breaking up after each arising. Having seen how various painful feelings arise in continuous succession, how if one painful feeling ceases, another arises, and when that has ceased, again another arises, having seen that, he comprehends the respective objects as just a heap of suffering. Further, he comprehends the object as consisting of mere ***impersonal*** phenomenon without a master, in the sense of not arising of (or by) themselves, but arising subject to conditions and then breaking up. This comprehension of an object noted, as being impermanent, painful, and without a self (impersonal), through knowing its nature of impermanence, etc., by means of simply noting, without reflecting and reasoning, is; ***Knowledge by Comprehension Through Direct Experience.***

Having seen the ***Three Characteristics*** once or several times by direct experience, the meditator, by inference from the direct experience of those objects noted, comprehends all body and mental processes of the past, present and future, and the whole world, by coming to the conclusion: 'They, too, are in the same way impermanent, painful, and without a self.' This is: ***Knowledge of Comprehension by Inference.*** As such, even if the impermanence of only a single formation (conditioned phenomenon) is known, there may be consideration of the rest by inference thus: ***All Formations are Impermanent.*** These words **'All formations are impermanent'** refer to an understanding by inference, and not to an understanding by perceiving a (co-present) object at the same moment.

4. Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away (Udayabbaya-nana)

The Ten Corruptions of Insight

When noting, the meditator is able to keep exclusively to the present body and mind process, without looking back to past processes or ahead to future ones, then, as a result of Insight, the mental vision of a ***brilliant light*** will appear to him. To one it will appear like the light of a lamp, to others like a flash of lightning, or like the radiance of the moon or the sun, and so on.

With one it may last for just one moment, with others it may last longer. There will also arise in him strong ***mindfulness*** pertaining to Insight. As a result, all the successive arisings of body and mental processes will present themselves to the consciousness engaged in noting, as if coming to it of themselves; and mindfulness too seems as if alighting on the processes of itself. Therefore the meditator then believes, ***'There is no body and mind process in which Mindfulness fails to engage'.***

His ***knowledge*** consisting in insight, here called ***'noting,'*** will be likewise keen, strong and lucid. Consequently, he will discern clearly and in separate forms all the body and mental processes noted, as if cutting to pieces a bamboo sprout with a well-sharpened knife. Therefore the meditator realises that: ***'There is no body and mind process that cannot be noted'.*** When examining the characteristics of impermanence, etc., or other aspects of reality, he understands everything quite clearly and at once, and he believes it to be the knowledge derived from direct experience.

Further, strong ***faith*** pertaining to Insight arises in him. Under its influence, the meditator's mind, when engaged in noting or thinking, is serene and without any disturbance, and when he is engaged in recollecting the virtues of the **Buddha**, the ***Dhamma*** and the ***Sangha***, his mind quite easily gives itself over to them. There arises in him the wish to proclaim the Buddha's Teaching, joyous confidence in the virtues of those engaged in meditation, the desire to advise dear friends and relatives to practise meditation, grateful remembrance of the help received from his meditation master, his spiritual mentor, etc. These and many other similar mental processes will occur. There arises also ***rapture*** in its five grades, which are: (1) minor, (2) momentarily recurring, (3) flooding, (4) elevating, (5) suffusing.

When **Purification of Mind** is gained, rapture appears producing a sublime feeling of happiness and exhilaration, filling the whole body with an exceedingly sweet and subtle thrill. Under its influence, he feels as if the whole body had risen up and remained in the air without touching the ground, or as if it were seated on an air cushion, or as if it were floating up and down. There arises ***tranquillity*** of mind with the characteristic of calming the disturbances of consciousness and its mental concomitants, and along with it mental agility appear, etc. When walking, standing, sitting or reclining there is, under the influence of these mental qualities, no disturbance of consciousness and its mental concomitants, nor heaviness, rigidity, unwieldiness, sickness, or crookedness.

Rather, his consciousness and its mental concomitants are tranquil through having reached the supreme relief in non-action (or *bare attention*). They are agile in always functioning swiftly; they are pliant in being able to attend to any object desired; they are wieldy, in being able to attend to an object for any length of time desired; they are quite lucid through their proficiency, that is, through the ease with which insight penetrates the object; they are also straight through being directed, inclined, and turned only towards wholesome activities.

There also arises a very sublime feeling of *happiness* suffusing all his body. Under its influence he becomes exceedingly joyous and blissful. There also arises in him *energy* that is neither too lax nor too tense, is vigorous and acts evenly. Previously his energy had sometimes been lax, and thus had been overpowered by sloth and torpor; hence he was not able to note keenly and continuously the objects as they became evident. His understanding, too, had not been clear. At other times his energy had been too tense, and thus was overpowered by agitation, with the same result of not being able to note keenly, etc. Now his energy is neither too lax nor too tense, is vigorous and acts evenly; and so, overcoming sloth, torpor and agitation, he is now able to note objects keenly and continuously, and his understanding is quite clear, too.

There also arises in him strong *equanimity* associated with Insight, which is neutral towards all formations. Under its influence he regards with neutrality even his examination of the nature of these formations with respect to their being impermanent, etc.; and he is able to note keenly and continuously the body and mental processes arising at the time. Then his activity of noting is carried on without effort, and proceeds, as it were, of itself. Also in adverting to the objects, there arises in him strong equanimity, by virtue of which his mind enters, as it were, quickly into the objects of advertence. There arises further a subtle *attachment* of a calm nature that enjoys the Insight graced with the 'brilliant light' and the other qualities here described. ***The meditator, however, is not able to discern it as a corruption but believes it to be just the very bliss of meditation. So meditators speak in praise of it thus: 'Only now do I find full delight in meditation!' Having felt such rapture and happiness accompanied by the 'brilliant light' and enjoying the very act of perfect noting, which is ably functioning with ease and rapidity, the meditator now believes: 'Surely I must have attained the supramundane Path and Fruition! Now I have finished the task of meditation.' This Is Mistaking What Is Not The Path For The Path***

It is a corruption of Insight which usually takes place in the manner just described in the few preceding paragraphs. But even if the meditator does not take the ‘brilliant light’ and the other corruptions as an indication of the Path and Fruition, still he feels delight in them. This is likewise a corruption of insight. Therefore, the knowledge consisting in noting, even if quick in its functioning, is ‘the early stage of (or 'weak') knowledge of arising and passing away,’ if it is beset and corrupted by those corruptions. For the same reason the meditator is at that time not in a position to discern quite distinctly the arising and passing away of body and mental processes.

[*The supramundane paths and fruitions are: stream-entry (sotapanna), once-returning (sakadagami), non-returning (anagami), and Arahantship. By attaining to stream-entry, final deliverance is assured at the latest, after seven more rebirths. A sotapanna is free from the three fetters: (1) sakkayaditthi, (2) vicikiccha, (3) silabbata-paramasa. Furthermore his observance of the five precepts, morality, remains pure and unpolluted as a matter of course. For these reasons, (1) a sotapanna is liberated from the four Nether Worlds and after being reborn in the world of human beings or devas for seven existences at the most, he will attain Arahantship in his last seventh existence and pass into Nibbana. (2) a sakadagami is free from coarse sensuous cravings (kamaraga) and coarse ill-will (byapada). He will enter Arahantship and Nibbana only after two existences at most. (3) an anagami is absolutely free from kamaraga, byapada and will never be reborn in the world of humans or devas, but only in the Brahma Worlds from which he will attain Nibbana after becoming an Arahant.]

V. PURIFICATION BY KNOWLEDGE AND VISION OF WHAT IS PATH AND WHAT IS NOT- PATH (Maggamagga-nanadassana-Visuddhi)

While noting, the meditator either by himself or through instructions from someone else, comes to this decision: ‘The brilliant light, and the other things experienced by me, are not the path. Delight in them is merely a corruption of Insight. ***The practice of continuously noting the object as it becomes evident - that alone is the way of Insigh.*** I must go on with just the work of noting.’

This decision is: ***Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What is Path and What is Not-Path.***

VI. PURIFICATION BY KNOWLEDGE AND VISION OF THE COURSE OF PRACTICE (Patipada-nanadassana-Visuddhi)

After noting these manifestations of brilliant light and such others, and leaving them unheeded, he goes on continuously as before with the act of noting the body and mental processes as they become evident at the Six Sense Doors. While thus engaged in noting, he gets over the corruption relating to brilliant light, rapture, tranquillity, happiness, attachment, etc., and his knowledge remains concerned exclusively with the arising and passing away of the processes noted. For then, at each act of noting, he sees: ***'The noted object, having arisen, disappears instantly.'***

It also becomes clear to him that each object disappears just where it arises; it does not move on to another place. In this way he understands by direct experience how: ***Body and Mental Processes arise and break up from moment…to…moment.*** It is such knowledge and understanding resulting from the continuous noting of body and mental processes as they arise and dissolve moment after moment, and the discernment, in separate sections, of the arising and passing away of each of them, while being free from the corruptions, that is the: ***Final Knowledge of Contemplation of Arising And Passing Away.*** This is the beginning of: ***Purification by Knowledge and Vision of The Course of Practice.*** Which begins from this insight and extends to ***Adaptation Knowledge.***

5. Knowledge Of Dissolution (Bhanga-nana)

Noting the body and mental processes as they arise, he sees them part by part, link by link, piece by piece, fraction by fraction: 'Just now it arises, just now it breaks-up.' When ***Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away*** becomes mature, keen and strong, it will arise easily and proceed uninterrupted as if borne onward of itself; also the body and mental processes will be easily discernible. When keen knowledge carries on and formations are easily discernible, then neither the arising of each body and mental process, nor its middle phase of 'presence,' nor the continuity of body and mental processes of 'occurrence as unbroken flux' is apparent to him; nor are the shape of the hand, the foot, the face, the body, and so on, apparent to him. But what is apparent to him is only the *ceasing* of body and mental processes, 'disappearing,' or 'passing away,' or 'dissolution.' For instance, while noting the rising movement of the abdomen, neither its initial nor middle phase is apparent, but only the ceasing or disappearing, which is the final phase, is apparent; and so it is also with the falling movement of the abdomen.

Again, in the case of bending an arm or leg, while noting the act of bending, neither the initial nor the middle phase of bending is apparent, nor is the form of the limb apparent, but only the final phase of ceasing and disappearing is apparent. It is similar in the other cases of stretching a limb, and so on. Each object that is being noted seems to him to be entirely absent or to have become non-existent.

Consequently, at this stage of knowledge, it seems to him as if he were engaged in noting something which is absent or non-existent; and the consciousness engaged in noting appears to have lost contact with the object that is being noted. It is for that reason that a meditator may here think: 'I have lost the Insight'; but he should not think so. Prior to this stage, his consciousness delights in conceptual objects of shapes, etc.; and even up to the Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away, the idea of formations with their specific features… [this phrase elaborates the meaning applicable here of the Pali term nimitta, which literally means 'mark,' 'sign,' 'feature,' i.e. the idea or image conceived of an object perceived.]… have always been apparent to him. Hence his mind took delight in a plainly distinguishable object consisting of formations, with its particular structure [*the distinctive (vi) graspable (gaha) form of an object.*] and its particular feature-idea. But now that his knowledge has developed in the way described, no such idea of the formations' features or structures appear to him, still less any other, cruder concept.

At such a stage, the arising of formations, that is, the first phase of the process, is not apparent (as it is in the case of ***Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away***), but there is apparent only the dissolution, that is, the final phase, having the nature of disappearing. Therefore the meditator's mind does not take delight in it at first, but he may be sure that soon, after becoming familiar (with that stage of the practice), his mind will delight in the cessation (of the phenomena) too, which is called their dissolution. With this assurance he should again turn to the practice of continuous noting. When thus engaged, he perceives that in each act of noting there are always present two factors; ***an objective factor and a subjective one, the object noted and the mental state of knowing it, which breaks-up and disappears by pairs, one pair after the other.*** In each single instance of a rising movement of the abdomen, there are, in fact, numerous physical processes constituting the rising movement, which are seen to break-up serially.

It is like seeing the continuous successive disappearing of a summer mirage moment by moment; or the quick and continuous bursting of bubbles produced in a heavy shower by rain drops falling on a water surface; or like the quick, successive extinction of oil-lamps or candles, blown out by the wind. Similar to that appears the breaking-up and disappearing, moment by moment, of the body processes noted. And the dissolution of consciousness noting those body processes is apparent to him along with the dissolution of the body processes.

Also while he is noting other body and mental processes, their dissolution will be apparent to him in the same manner. Consequently, the knowledge will come to him that whatever part of the whole body is noted, that object ceases first, and after it the consciousness engaged in noting that object follows in its wake. From that the meditator will understand very clearly in the case of each successive pair the dissolution of any object whatsoever and the dissolution of the consciousness noting that very object. [It should be borne in mind that this refers only to understanding arrived at through direct experience by one engaged in noting only; it is not an opinion derived from reasoning.] It is the perfectly clear understanding of the dissolution of the two things, pair by pair: the visual or other object appearing at any of the six sense doors, and the consciousness noting that very object. ***This is Knowledge of Dissolution.***

6. Awareness of Fearfulness (Bhayatupatthana-nana)

When **Knowledge of Dissolution** is mature, through repeated noting of the dissolution of all object-and-subject-formations, or mind and matter phenomena, there will gradually arise, the awareness of **Fearfulness** and other (**Higher**) **Knowledge**, together with their respective aspects of fear, and so on. Having seen how the dissolution of two things, that is, any object noted and the insight-thought engaged in noting it, takes place moment by moment, the meditator also understands by inference that in the past, too, every conditioned thing (formation) had broken up in the same way, as just so it will break up also in the future, and that at the present it breaks up, too. Just at the time of noting any formation that is evident, this formation will appear to him in its aspect of fearfulness. Therefore, during the very act of noting, the meditator will also come to understand: ***'These formations are indeed fearful.'*** Such understanding of their fearfulness is: ***Knowledge of the Awareness of Fearfulness,*** [it also has the name '**Knowledge of Fear**'] at which stage, his mind will be gripped by fear and appear helpless.

7. Knowledge of Misery (Adinava-nana)

When he has realised the fearfulness (of the formations) through the ***Knowledge of Fear,*** and keeps on noting continuously, then the ***Knowledge of Misery*** will arise in him before long. When it has arisen, all formations everywhere; whether among the objects noted, or among the states of consciousness engaged in noting, or in any kind of life or existence that is brought to mind; will appear insipid, without a vitalizing factor,...[*without nutritive essence*]...and unsatisfying. So he sees, at that time, only suffering, only unsatisfactoriness, only misery. This is: ***Knowledge of Misery.***

8. Knowledge of Disgust (Nibbida-nana)

Seeing thus the misery in conditioned things (formations), his mind finds no delight in those miserable things but is entirely disgusted with them. At times, his mind becomes, as it were, discontented and listless. Even so he does not give up the practice of insight, but spends his time continuously engaging in it. He therefore should know that this state of mind is not dissatisfaction with meditation, but is precisely: The ***Knowledge of Disgust.*** This has the aspect of being disgusted with the formations. Even if he directs his thought to the happiest sort of life and existence, or to the most pleasant and desirable objects, his mind will not take delight in them, will find no satisfaction in them. On the contrary, his mind will incline, lean and tend only towards Nibbana. Therefore the following thought will arise in him between moments of noting: ***'The ceasing of all formations that are falling away from moment to moment; that alone is happiness.'***

9. Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance (Muncitu-kamyata-nana)

When through this Knowledge (now acquired) he feels disgust with regard to every formation noted, there will arise in him a desire to forsake these formations or to become delivered from them. The knowledge relating to that desire is: ***Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance.*** At that time, usually various painful feelings arise in his body, and also an unwillingness to remain long in one particular body posture. Even if these states do not arise, the comfortless nature of the formations will become more evident than ever. And due to that, between moments of noting, he feels a longing thus: 'Oh, may I soon be free from this! Oh, may I reach the state where these formations cease! Oh, may I be able to give up these formations completely!' At this juncture, his consciousness engaged in noting seems to shrink from the object noted at each moment of noting, and wishes to escape from it.

10. Knowledge of Re-observation (Patisankhanupassana-nana)

Being thus desirous of escaping from the formations, the meditator makes a stronger effort and continues the practice of noting these very formations with the single purpose of forsaking them and escaping from them. For that reason, the knowledge arising at that time is: ***Knowledge of Re-Observation***. The term 're-observation' has the same meaning as 're-noting' or 're-contemplation.' Then the nature (or characteristics) of the formations; their being impermanent, suffering and without a self; will be clearly evident to him; and among these three, the aspect of suffering will be particularly distinct.

At this stage, too, there will usually arise in his body various kinds of pains which are severe, sharp, and of growing intensity. Hence his whole body and mental system will seem to him like an unbearable mass of sickness or a conglomeration of suffering. A state of restlessness will usually manifest itself, making him incapable of keeping to one particular posture for any length of time, then he will soon want to change it. This state, however, simply manifests the unbearable nature of the formations. Though he wants to change his body posture, still he should not give in easily to that wish, but should endeavour to remain motionless for a longer period in the same posture and continue to carry on the practice of noting; and by doing so he will be able to overcome his restlessness.

Now his Insight Knowledge is quite strong and lucid, and by virtue of this, even his painful feelings will at once cease as soon as they are firmly noted. Even if a painful feeling does not cease completely, he will perceive that it is disappearing, part by part, from moment to moment. That is to say, the passing away, the ceasing, disappearing, and disappearing of each single moment of feeling will become apparent separately in each corresponding act of noting. In other words, it is a progressive development from the stage of **Knowledge of Comprehension**, when the constant flow or continuity of feelings of the same kind was apparent as a single unit. But if, without abandoning the practice, that feeling of pain is firmly and continuously noted, it will cease entirely before long. When it ceases in this way, it does so for good and will not arise again. Even so, he may not be satisfied with his progress and will think that his Insight Knowledge is not clear.

He should, however, dismiss such thoughts by applying the act of noting to them, and he should go on with his task of continuously noting the body and mental formations as they occur. If he perseveres thus, his noting will become clearer as time passes in minutes, hours and days. Then he will overcome the painful feelings and the restlessness in being unable to remain long in one particular posture, and also the idea that his Insight Knowledge is not yet clear enough. His noting will then function rapidly, and at every moment of noting he will understand quite clearly the three characteristics of impermanence, etc.

This understanding of the Three Characteristics of Existence:; **IMPERMANENCE**, **UNSATISFACTORINESS** and **NON-SELF**, through the act of noting which functions with promptness in quick succession, is: ***Strong Knowledge of Re-Observation.***

11. Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations (Sankhar'-upekkha-nana)

When this **Knowledge of Re-observation** is mature, there will arise knowledge perceiving evident body and mental processes in continuous succession quite naturally, as if borne onward of itself. This is: **Knowledge of Equanimity About Formations**.

Now, in the act of noting, effort is no longer required to keep formations before the mind or to understand them. After the completion of each single act of noting, the object to be noted will appear by itself, and Insight Knowledge, too, will of itself note and understand it. It is as if no further effort need be made by the meditator. Earlier, due to seeing the ***Dissolution of Formations***, there arose, in successive order:

- ***Aspect of Fearfulness,***
- ***Perception of Misery,***
- ***Aspect of Disgust,***
- ***Desire for Deliverance, and***
- ***Dissatisfaction with the Knowledge so far acquired.***

But now these mental states no longer arise even though, in the present state too, the breaking up of formations which are disappearing more rapidly is closely perceived. Even if a painful feeling arises in the body, no mental disturbance, such as grief arises, and there is no lack of fortitude in bearing with it.

Generally, however, at this stage, pains will be entirely absent, they do not arise at all. Even if the meditator thinks about something fearful or sad, no mental disturbance will arise, be it in the form of fear or of sorrow. This, firstly, is: ***The Abandoning of Fear at the Stage of Equanimity about Formations.*** At the earlier stage, on attaining **Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away**, great joy had arisen on account of the clarity of Insight. But now this kind of joy does not arise, even though there is present the exceedingly peaceful and sublime clarity of mind belonging to '**Equanimity about Formations**.' Though he sees desirable objects conducive to joy, or thinks about various enjoyable things, no strong feeling of joy will arise. This is: ***The Abandoning of Delight at the Stage of Equanimity about Formations.*** He cherishes no desire nor hate with regard to any object, desirable or undesirable, that comes into his sense doors, but taking them as just the same in his act of noting, he understands them [that is to say, it is a pure act of understanding]. This is: ***Equable Vision at the Stage Equanimity about Formations.*** Of these three qualities just mentioned, it is said: 'Having discarded fear and delight, he is impartial and neutral towards all formations' (*Visuddhimagga,* xxi 62).

If he resumes the practice of noting, thinking: 'Now I will do it vigorously again!' then, before long, the noting will function efficiently as if borne onward of itself. From now onwards there is no need for the meditator to make further, deliberate effort. His noting will now proceed in a continuous and steady flow for a long time; it will go on even for two or three hours without interruption. This is: ***The State of Long-Lasting Practice of Equanimity about Formations.*** Now when noting functions spontaneously as if borne onward of itself, the mind, even if sent out towards a variety of objects, generally refuses to go; and even if it does go, it will not stay long but will soon return to the usual object to be noted, and will resume continuous noting. In this connection it was said: 'He shrinks, recoils, and retreats; he does not go forth to it.'

12. Insight Leading to Emergence (Vutthanagamini-Vipassana-nana)

So, through **Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations,** which is endowed with many virtues, blessings, and power, he notes the formations as they occur. This Knowledge when culminating in maturity, and becoming keen, strong and lucid, will understand the formations as being **impermanent, painful** or **without self,** by noting their dissolution.

Now that act of noting any one characteristic out of the three, which is still more lucid in its perfect understanding, manifests itself two or three times or more in rapid succession. This is*: Insight Leading to Emergence*. The 'insight leading to emergence' is the culmination of insight, and is identical with the following three knowledge: **Equanimity About Formations, Desire For Deliverance, and Knowledge of Re-Observation**. It is called 'leading to emergence' because it emerges from the contemplation of formations (conditioned phenomena) to the supramundane path that has Nibbana as its object.

Thereupon, immediately after the last consciousness in the series of acts of noting this '**Insight Leading to Emergence'**, the meditator's consciousness leaps forth into Nibbana, the **Cessation of all Formations,** taking it as its object. ***Then there appears to him the stilling (subsidence) of all Formations called Cessation.*** This mode of realisation of **Nibbana** has been mentioned in many discourses of the Master, for example: ***The Vision of Truth Arose: Whatsoever has the Nature of Arising; is Bound to Cease.*** Herein the words 'bound to cease' indicate the aspect of realising the stilling and ceasing of all formations which have the nature of arising.

The meaning is this: the meditator who wishes to realise **Nibbana** should repeatedly bring to mind, through the practice of noting, every body and mental process that appears at any of the Six Sense Doors. When he brings them to mind thus, his consciousness engaged in noting; here called 'bringing to mind' will, until Adaptation Knowledge is reached, fall at every moment upon the (conditioned) body and mental formations called here 'continuous occurrence,' because they go on occurring over and over again in an unbroken flow, like a river's current. But in the last phase, instead of falling upon that continuous occurrence, consciousness passes beyond it and alights upon 'non-occurrence,' which is the very opposite of the body and mental formations called 'occurrence.'

In other words, it arrives at non-occurrence; that is to say; it reaches, as if it 'alights upon,' Cessation, which is the Stilling of the Formations (or conditioned phenomena).

When the meditator, having already before practised correctly and without deviation by way of the **Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away** and the other **Knowledge** (or by way of the Purification of Conduct, of Mind, of View, etc.), has in this manner arrived at non-occurrence (by the consciousness alighting upon it), he is said to have 'realised Nibbana.' He has made Nibbana a direct experience and has actually seen it.

13. Knowledge of Adaptation (Anuloma-nana)

Here the knowledge by way of noting what occurs last in: ***the series constituting Insight leading to Emergence, is; Knowledge Of Adaptation.*** The knowledge of adaptation derives its name from the fact that it adapts itself to the earlier and the later states of mind. It adapts itself to the preceding eight insight knowledges with their individual functions, and to the thirty-seven states partaking of enlightenment that follow.

This Is the end of the Purification By Knowledge and Vision of the Course of Practice.

14. Maturity Knowledge (Gotrabhu-nana)

Immediately afterwards, **Maturity Knowledge** manifests itself, as it were, falls for the first time into Nibbana, which is void of formations (conditioned phenomena) since it is the cessation of all formations. Gotrabhu-nana (maturity knowledge) is, literally, the 'knowledge of one who has become one of the lineage (gotra).' By attaining to that knowledge, one has left behind the designation and stage of an unliberated worldling and is entering the lineage and rank of the noble ones, i.e. the stream-enterer, etc. Insight has now come to full maturity, maturing into the knowledge of the supramundane paths and fruitions. Maturity knowledge occurs only as a single moment of consciousness; it does not recur, since it is immediately followed by the path consciousness of stream-entry or once-returning, etc.

VII. PURIFICATION BY KNOWLEDGE AND VISION (Nanadassana-Visuddhi)

15. Path Knowledge (Magga-nana)

It is followed immediately by knowledge that abides in that same Nibbana, which is void of formations since it is the cessation of them. This is: ***Path Knowledge.*** Path knowledge is the knowledge connected with the four supramundane paths of stream-entry, etc. Here, in this passage, only the path of stream-entry is meant.

Path knowledge, like maturity knowledge, lasts only for one moment of consciousness, being followed by the fruition knowledge resulting from it, which may repeat itself many times and may also be deliberately entered into by way of the 'attainment of fruition' ...It is also known as: ***Purification by Knowledge and Vision.***

16. Fruition Knowledge (Phala-nana)

That is immediately followed by knowledge that belongs to the final stage and continues in the course of its predecessor. It abides in that same Nibbana, which is void of formations since it is the cessation of them. This is: ***Fruition Knowledge.***

17. Knowledge of Reviewing (Paccavekkhana-nana)

The duration of the threefold Knowledge of Maturity, Path and Fruition is, however, not long. It is very short, and lasts for just an instant, like the duration of a single thought of noting. Subsequently there arises: ***Knowledge of Reviewing.*** Through this Knowledge of Reviewing the meditator discerns that the Insight Leading to Emergence came along with the very rapid function of noting, and immediately after the last phase of noting, the path consciousness entered into the cessation (of formations). This is: ***Knowledge Reviewing the Path.***

He also discerns that the consciousness abided in this same state of cessation during the intervening period between the path and reviewing. This is: ***Knowledge Reviewing Fruition.*** He further discerns that the object just experienced is void of all formations. This is: ***Knowledge Reviewing Nibbana.*** Some meditators, [not all] have ***'Reviewing of Defilement.'*** ...

[The knowledge of reviewing defilement still remaining, is not obtained at the stage of Arahantship where all defilement have been eliminated. It may occur, but not necessarily so, at the lower three stages of stream-entry, etc.]

... After having reviewed in this way, the **meditator still continues** the practice of noting body and mental processes as they become evident. But while he is thus engaged in noting, the body and mental processes appear to him quite coarse, not subtle as before at the time of the ***Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations.*** This is because the knowledge present now, has the nature of the ***Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away.***

For when the noble disciples (namely, stream-winners, etc.) resume the practice of Insight (by noting), the **Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away** usually arises at the beginning. This is the usual order in this respect. However, when some meditators emerge from the attainment of Path and Fruition, great faith, happiness, rapture and tranquillity, produced by virtue of the attainment, arise flooding the whole body. Owing to that, they are unable to carry out the practice of noting anything apparent at that time. Even if they double their effort and attempt to proceed with the practice of Insight, they will fail to discern the phenomena clearly and separately, at the moment of their occurrence.

They continue to experience only rapture, tranquillity, and happiness, which occur with great force. This state of mind, which is extraordinarily serene through strong faith prevailing, lasts for one hour, two hours, or more, without break. Because of this, meditators feel as if they were in some wide open space suffused with radiance and most delightful. The rapture and happiness, of a serene character, which then arise are praised by meditators thus: 'Surely, I have never before felt and experienced such happiness!' After two or three hours have passed, that faith, happiness, rapture and tranquillity will fade. The meditators can once again proceed with noting the body and mental processes as they occur, distinguishing them separately, and they will be able to discern them clearly. But at that time, too, first the **Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away** will appear.

18. Attainment of Fruition (Phalasampatti)

While he is thus engaged in noting, his Insight Knowledge will gradually grow, and soon will again reach the stage of **Equanimity about Formations.** If his power of concentration is still short of perfection, only the **Equanimity about Formations** will go on repeating itself. But if his concentration has reached perfection, then, in the case of one who does the Insight practice of noting with a view of attaining only to the First Path and Fruition, the Fruition Consciousness of the First Path alone reaches Cessation of Formations by way of the ***attainment of fruition***. This occurs in precisely the same way as the Path and Fruition Consciousness that occurred earlier in the consciousness-sequence belonging to the initial attainment of the First Path. The only difference here is the capacity of the fruition attainment to last long.

One should also set one's mind resolutely upon the further tasks: to be able to repeat the achievement of Fruition attainment, to achieve it rapidly, and, at the time of achievement, to abide in it a long time, say for six, ten, fifteen or thirty minutes, or for an hour or more. As one who applies himself to achieving the attainment of Fruition, **Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away** will arise at the beginning. Advancing from there in due sequence, soon **Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations** will be reached. But when skill in the practice has been acquired, the **Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations** will arise quickly even after four or five acts of noting. If the power of concentration has reached perfection, the Fruition Consciousness will repeatedly become absorbed in Cessation by way of Fruition attainment. The mind can thus reach absorption even while one is walking up and down, or while taking a meal, and the Fruition attainment can remain for any length of time resolved upon. During the Fruition attainment, the mind will abide only in the **Cessation of Formations** and will not be aware of anything else.

19. The Higher Paths and Fruitions

When the meditator has thus become skilled in achieving the Fruition attainment, he should resolutely set his mind upon the task of attaining to the **Higher Paths and Fruitions**. What should now be done by one who has set himself that task? Just as before: **He should carry out the practice of noting Arising phenomena at the Six Sense Doors.** Hence, the meditator should note any body and mental process that becomes evident to him at the Six Sense Doors. While he is thus engaged, he will see, at the stage of **Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away**, that the first objects consisting of formations appear to him rather coarse, and that his mind is not well concentrated.

The development of Insight belonging to the Higher Paths is, in fact, not as easy as that of Insight belonging to the Fruition attainment already achieved by the meditator. It is in fact somewhat difficult, due to the fact that Insight has to be developed anew. It is, however, not so very difficult as it had been in the first time, when beginning the practice In a single day, or even in a single hour, he can gain the **Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations**. This statement is made here, based on the experiences usually gained by persons of the present day who had to be given guidance from the start and who did not possess particularly strong intelligence. Here it is applied, by inference, to similar types of persons in general.

But although **Equanimity about Formations** has been attained, if the spiritual **faculties have not yet reached full maturity**, it just goes on repeating itself and he will not be able to attain to the next Higher Path within one, two, three, or more days. He abides merely in **Equanimity about Formations**. If, however, he then directs his mind to reach the Fruition already attained, he will attain it in two or three minutes. However, when the spiritual **faculties are mature**, one who practises Insight for attaining to a Higher Path will find that immediately after **Equanimity about Formations** has reached its culmination, the **Higher Path and Fruition** arise in the same way as before (i.e. as at the time of the First Path and Fruition), that is to say, it is preceded by the stages of Adaptation and Maturity. After the Fruition, the stages of Reviewing, etc., that follow are also the same as before. Anything else concerning the method of Practice for Insight and the Progress of Knowledge right up to Arahantship can be understood in precisely the same way as described. Hence there is no need to elaborate it any further.

CONCLUSION

Now these are my concluding good wishes: Just as a very delicious, appetising, tasty and nutritious meal can be appreciated fully only by one who has himself eaten it; in the same way, the whole series of Knowledges described here can be understood fully only by one who has himself seen it by direct experience, and not otherwise. So may all good people reach the Stage of Understanding of this whole series of Knowledges!

May they also strive to attain it!
MAHASI SAYADAW

APPENDIX

NIBBANA

The Words of the Buddha is Universal; His teachings were meant for gods and men; not confined to a narrow group of beings known as buddhists. Furthermore, His Words were timeless; that is to say, His teachings were neither meant only for the times in the past, nor only for the time He was alive. Timeless means His Words were not confined by time; His Words were functional in the very dim unfathomable past; slipping into the present time and into the very distant unimaginable span of time for incalculable aeons. His Words were meant for yesterdays, today, this moment and for time to come. In short, His Words are Eternal; in all the things He taught; He taught that all were impermanent; only Nibbana is Eternal or Timeless. In all the things that He taught; All lead to one destination; he taught that **Nibbana is the ultimate goal for all living beings**. This destination, this goal, is not what we conceive it to be; Nibbana is neither material nor abstract. It is of great importance then, that we should investigate what Nibbana is or is not. In the final analysis, we cannot hope to understand it fully until we realise it or reach it. Only the Buddha has direct knowledge of Nibbana.

DEFINITION

Nibbana is defined as that by which the flames of greed, hatred and delusion come to extinction. Here Nibbana is viewed as the means to which a person **extinguishes greed, hatred and delusion, the inherent mental defilement. Nibbana is also defined as the cessation of greed, hatred and delusion**; the total extinction and non arising of greed, hatred and delusion. That is what is known as Nibbana. So Nibbana can be defined in different ways; that which gets out of craving, that by which the flames of greed, hatred and delusion come to extinction, or just the extinction or cessation of greed, hatred and delusion. It is also the extinction of suffering because when there is greed, hatred and delusion there is suffering. So it is also the cessation or extinction of suffering. Nibbana is described in the Pali texts in many Suttas, in many words, in many ways. Generally Nibbana is described as that which is beyond logic or reason. We cannot understand Nibbana or we cannot really fully understand Nibbana by logic or just by reasoning. This is because ***Nibbana is a Dhamma to be realised by oneself. We cannot understand Nibbana just by listening, or just by reading, or just by thinking logically. We can only understand it through self-experience. It is beyond logic and reasoning.***

Since it is beyond logic and reasoning, it is said to be deep. Because it is deep it is difficult to get hold of; difficult to grasps its nature. So it is described as that which is difficult to see and difficult to realise. One has to apply the practice of insight meditation to truly realise Nibbana. One will have to spend not one life, but two, three, four, ten, twenty or even more life times to realise Nibbana. It is much more difficult to talk about Nibbana because we have no words to describe it. If we say Nibbana is a thing, then that will have the connotation that that something has a beginning and an end. Hence, to see it, to realise it is even more difficult.

Nibbana is described as that which can be realised only by those wise people who follow the practice. Nibbana cannot be reached just by wishing for it, just by reading, just by listening, just by talking about it. One realises it, reaches it, sees it through self-experience of the diligent practice of the **tenets of the Noble Eightfold Path, specifically Mindfulness or Insight Meditation.** It is realised by those wise people who take up the practice of Mindfulness Meditation. **'Wise people' means those who have gained penetrative knowledge into the nature of things.** Without the penetrative knowledge of the nature of things there can be no realisation of the truth. Nibbana is for those people who have gained insight wisdom, who have the penetrative knowledge into the nature of things and also penetrative knowledge of Nibbana itself.

Nibbana is also described as that which is to be realised by the wise each in his mind. Here we have 'each in his mind'. That means Nibbana realised by one person is his Nibbana and another person's realisation of Nibbana is his Nibbana and so on. There are different Nibbanas for different people. It is to be recognised by each in his mind. That means the other person cannot realise Nibbana for us. We have to realise Nibbana in our minds. We have to realise Nibbana ourselves. These are the general descriptions of Nibbana.

Now we come to the intrinsic nature of Nibbana. In the First Discourse, the Dhammacakapavatthana Sutta the Blessed One taught **the Four Noble Truths.** When he described the Third Noble Truth he said: 'It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, giving it up, relinquishing it, letting it go, not relying on it.' Here The Blessed One described Nibbana as 'the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving. That means the craving described as the Second Noble Truth. That is why he said here 'that same craving'.

So Nibbana is the total fading away and cessation of craving, giving it up, relinquishing it, letting it go, not relying on it. Here The Blessed One did not say that the Third Noble Truth or Nibbana is the cessation of suffering. He said that it is the cessation of craving because The Blessed One wanted to go to the root itself, to the cause itself. When the cause is destroyed, then the effect is also destroyed. So here Nibbana is the cessation of craving. When craving ceases along with ignorance, suffering ceases. So it is the same as saying the cessation of suffering. This fading away or cessation is total, never to come up again. Then it is explained or described as extinction of' thirst, or that by which thirst comes to extinction. There are always two kinds of explanations for these words. One is description by abstract noun. For example Nibbana is extinction. The other is by way of something like the instrumental case, something by which thirst comes to extinction. It may mean the same thing, but it is from a little different angle.

Just the extinction of thirst, the extinction of craving is Nibbana. Also Nibbana is that by which craving comes to extinction. Nibbana serves as the object for Path consciousness, which when it arises, eradicates mental defilement or eradicates thirst or craving. It is the extinction of thirst or that by which thirst comes to extinction. In other Suttas Nibbana is described as extinction of greed, extinction of hatred, extinction of delusion, or that by which greed, hatred and delusion come to extinction. Always we have to understand in two ways; extinction or that by which something comes to extinction.

NIBBANA IS DESCRIBED AS UNCONDITIONED.

Nibbana does not arise. Nibbana is, but it does not exist. It does not exist as the other conditioned things exist. Nibbana is not caused by anything. Nibbana is not the result of anything. It is not conditioned by anything.

The next one is cessation of continuity and becoming. When there is continuity of becoming, when there is existing, it is called Samsara. When Samsara ceases, there is no more continuity of becoming, no more rebirth. Nibbana is the cessation of the continuity of becoming, the cessation of rebirth. Nibbana is described as the opposite of conditioned phenomena. Conditioned phenomena has an arising and a disappearing. Nibbana has no arising. Therefore Nibbana has no disappearing. So Nibbana is the opposite of conditioned phenomena which has arising. It is devoid of continuously arising phenomena.

If you look at the thoughts of your mind, you know that thought moments come one after another like the current of a river or like a stream. Since Nibbana has no arising, no beginning, there is nothing continuously arising in Nibbana. Nibbana is devoid of continuously arising phenomena. So it is the opposite of conditioned things because conditioned things are always arising and disappearing, arising and disappearing. They seem to be continuously going on.

Nibbana is described as **signless**. It manifests as signless. It has no sign, or shape, or form of Nibbana. One cannot describe Nibbana as a square thing, or a round thing, or as having color or whatever. Nibbana has no sign, no shape, no form. Conditioned phenomena has sign and form. We always see things with a shape and form. When we look at our hands, we think that we see the shape or form of the hand. What we actually see is the visible object, or visible matter, or visible data, and not the shape or form, but we think we see it.

This sign, or shape, or form cannot be got rid of easily even when you practise Vipassana meditation. It is always with these signs that we practise. When you concentrate on the breath, you see something at the tip of the nose going in and out. If you concentrate on the movements of the abdomen, you may see the shape of the abdomen rising and falling. It is very difficult to see the real nature of the rising and falling with the sign or the shape and form of the abdomen. But when you get to the higher levels of Vipassana meditation, there is a stage where meditators see the **dissolution of things** rather than the arising of things. Meditators see arising and disappearing, arising and disappearing. Later on disappearing becomes more prominent than arising for them.

At that stage they begin to lose seeing forms and shapes. They cannot see any form or any shape. They just see the nature of things, not the shape or form of things, Even such Vipassana knowledge which does not take Nibbana as object can see things without sign. When there is Nibbana, it becomes signless. There is no sign of Nibbana. We will come to that later. The conditioned phenomena always have signs, or shapes or forms. We want to be reborn in a better existence, in a better life. So there is this desire or this making effort to become better. Nibbana has no such endeavour because when one realises Nibbana, one has reached the utmost or top most level. There is no more function to perform. Nibbana is that which is free from the endeavor for the better.

Nibbana is described as **non-relinking**. In the world of conditioned phenomena or in the world of Samsara we have relinking. That means rebirth, one birth after another, always going on and on and on. When one attains Nibbana, there is no more relinking, no more rebirth. When an Arahant or a Buddha dies, there is no more rebirth for them. Nibbana is the opposite of conditioned phenomena which has relinking. So it is non-relinking. Nibbana is also described as **freedom; freedom from mental defilement**, freedom from suffering, freedom from the round of rebirths. These descriptions are mostly of negative nature. Nibbana is also described in **positive terms.** We now have a positive term, **Sukha (happiness)**. Nibbana is described as happiness. However we must understand that here happiness is not the happiness we are familiar with. It is Sukha without sensation. Even during the time of The Blessed One, a monk asked the Venerable Sariputta about this happiness. Venerable Sariputta had said: 'Nibbana is happiness. Nibbana is happiness.' The monk asked: '*How can Nibbana be happiness since there is no sensation?*' Venerable Sariputta replied: 'That there is no sensation itself is happiness.' **'Happiness' here means peacefulness.** Happiness in the world is not the same as the happiness described here. Happiness here is peacefulness.

In one of the Suttas, The Blessed One described different kinds of happiness from enjoying life, happiness from enjoying sensual pleasures. That is a kind of happiness. Then there is jhana happiness which is better than that happiness. In jhana happiness there are no sensual pleasures, no enjoyment of sensual pleasures. Yet **The Blessed One said that the happiness of jhana is better than the happiness of sensual pleasures.** Furthermore second jhana happiness is better than first jhana happiness and so on.

Finally the Sutta comes to the happiness of the attainment of cessation. The happiness of Nibbana is the best happiness. It is not mixed with any greed or with attachment. It is also free of worry, anxiety and so on. It is real happiness, happiness which is peacefulness actually.

Nibbana is described as **Dapa (island)**. These are all metaphorical. It is described as an island because it serves as an island when we travel in the sea. It is like a place where we long to be. It is called refuge–Tana, Lena, Parayana. It is described as **peace (Santi)**. It is also described as **truth (Sacca).**

Nibbana is the cessation of mental defilement, the cessation of greed, hatred and delusion. 'Cessation' really means ‘not arising’. When the Path consciousness eradicates mental defilement, the mental defilement it eradicates are not past, not present, not future. The tendency toward greed, hatred and delusion is destroyed at the moment of Path consciousness. That tendency cannot be said to belong to the past, the present, or the future. That is why the cessation or the extinction of these mental defilement does not belong to any time, not to the past, the present or the future. If it does not belong to past, present or future, it comes to be known as permanent. It is always there. We do not know where, but it is always there. It is described as **permanent (Dhuva).**

It is also described as **excellent (Panita)** and **immortal (Amata)**. It is immortal because it has no beginning and so it has no end. If it has a beginning, it must have an end because it cannot escape this law of nature. When we come across this word 'Amata’ (deathless or immortal), we always think in terms of this existence. We want to have this existence. We want to have a beginning, but we don't want to have an end. We always think in that way. If we want to be deathless, we must have no birth. 'Amata’ means no birth, no death, no beginning, no end. That is deathless. If we have beginning as human beings, then we will come to an end as human beings. We cannot escape death. 'Immortal' really means no beginning and so no dying, no end. These are the descriptions of Nibbana in the Suttas and there are many more.

Now let us look at the characteristics of Nibbana. Whenever we understand something, we must understand by way of **characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause.** You will find the characteristic and others in the Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification) in the chapter on aggregates. Every Dhamma, everything taught in Abhidhamma, is to be understood by way of these three or four aspects. The first one is characteristic. Nibbana is also to be understood from these aspects.

The characteristic of Nibbana is just **peace, peacefulness**. Its function or quality is not to die which means **not to disappear, or not to be extinguished, not to cease**. Its function is **to comfort**. When one realises Nibbana, one is comforted. One doesn't have to worry about one's future. Its function or its quality is to comfort. It is manifested **as signless.** 'Manifested' here means manifested to the yogi, to the person who has really realised or who has really seen Nibbana for himself. That can come at the moment of Path consciousness.

Nibbana is manifested to these people as signless, as no sign. We cannot say that Nibbana is round or square, or long, or short, or luminous, or whatever. Those who perceive **Nibbana as luminous**, as similar to a country or a place are erroneous as the manifestation of **Nibbana is signlessness**. It manifests itself to meditators as signless. When meditators realise Nibbana, when meditators see Nibbana for themselves, they see Nibbana as possessing no sign, no form, no figure, no duration and no measure. Now after understanding what Nibbana is, let us see what **Nibbana is not.** Nibbana is not mere destruction. Nibbana is not mere nothing. Nibbana is the cessation of mental defilement. As the cessation of mental defilement, Nibbana is. Nibbana is something, but not nothingness or mere destruction.

Nibbana is not the result of the extinction of craving. The extinction of craving comes at the moment of Path consciousness. Path consciousness takes Nibbana as object. Nibbana is not the result of the extinction of craving; it is the extinction of craving or it is instrumental in the Path extinguishing craving.

When Path consciousness arises it takes Nibbana as an object and eradicates mental defilement. Nibbana is that by which the flames of greed, hatred and delusion come to extinction.

Nibbana is not a place, or a realm, or a position. It is not a place to go to. It is not a realm to reach. It is not a position to obtain. Whenever we talk about Nibbana, we think in terms of existence because we are on this shore and we cannot see the other shore. Until we reach the other shore, we will not see Nibbana clearly. So when we talk of Nibbana we may think of it as a place to go to, or as a realm, or as a position, or that which we can experience with the senses. Nibbana is not that. It is just a state, a state consisting of the extinction of mental defilement and the extinction of suffering.

There is only one Nibbana. As to the way it is made known there are two kinds of Nibbana. It is important to understand these two kinds of Nibbana. One is called **'Sa-upadisesa Nibbana'** which is made known by way of there being aggregates of clinging remaining. That means the Nibbana before the death of an Arahant. When a person becomes an Arahant, he has eradicated all mental defilement and he sees Nibbana directly. At the moment of becoming an Arahant and after becoming an Arahant there remain with him the aggregates because he still has the physical body and he still has his mind.

He still has these aggregates of clinging but the mental defilement are gone. Nibbana which an Arahant experiences or which an Arahant takes as an object before his death is called 'Sa-upadisesa'.

The second one is called **'Anupadisesa'.** This is Nibbana which is made known by way of there being no aggregates of clinging remaining. That means after the death of an Arahant, Nibbana becomes something which has no aggregates of clinging remaining. That means when the Arahant dies, then the aggregates of clinging disappear, not to arise again anymore; at the death of an Arahant Nibbana is called 'Anupadisesa'. It is also called **'Khandha PariNibbana'.** 'Khandha' means aggregates. So it is the extinction or blowing out of aggregates. That means the remaining aggregates of an Arahant (his body and mind) become extinct or blown out.

Nibbana is unconditioned, so it is devoid of all conditioned things. There is no greed, hatred or delusion in Nibbana. Nibbana is **'Sunnata'**. **Nibbana is Animitta.** That means free of signs, no signs of greed, hatred or delusion, no signs of all conditioned things. It is also called **'Appanihita'.** That is it is free from the hankering of greed, hatred and delusion.

LET YOUR AIM BE NIBBANA Ajahn Chah

It is the appropriate time for us to study the Dhamma in order to increase our **mindfulness and wisdom**. When it comes to **taking precepts**, for example, a monk will proclaim the precepts and the laypeople will vow to undertake them. Don't misunderstand what is going on. The truth is that **morality is not something that can be given.** Morality resides with the **intentions** of people. If you have the conscious **determination** to refrain from **harmful activities and wrongdoing by way of body and speech**, then morality is coming about within you. So really, whenever we wish to 'receive' morality and Dhamma, we have them right then. It is just like the air that surrounds us everywhere. Whenever we breathe, we take it in. All manner of good and evil are like that. If we wish to do good, we can do it anywhere, at any time. We can do it alone, or together with others. Evil is the same. We can do it with a large or small group, in a hidden or open place. It is like that.

Morality is normal for all humans to practise. A person who has no morality is no different from an animal. We are born into this world, and all of us will naturally have the afflictions of desire, anger and delusion. Desire makes us crave after various things and causes the mind to be in a state of imbalance and turmoil. Nature is like that. It will just not do to let the mind go after these impulses of craving. It only leads to heat and distress. People are born with physical form and mind. In the beginning these things are born, in the middle they change, and in the end they are extinguished. This is ordinary; this is their nature. We cannot do much to alter these facts. We train our minds as best we can, and when the time comes we have to let go of it all. It is beyond the ability of humans to change this or get beyond it. ***The Dhamma that the Buddha taught is something to be applied while we are here, for making actions, words and thoughts correct and proper.*** His Dhamma is a teaching that is above and beyond the world. We are in the world. We were born into this world; he taught us to transcend the world, not being prisoner to worldly ways and habits. The authentic Dhamma of the Buddha is not something pointing far away. It teaches self. It teaches about ***atta***, **self**, and that things are not really self. That is all. ***All the teachings that the Buddha gave were pointing out that 'this is not a self, this does not belong to a self, there is no such thing as ourselves or others.'***

Here, when we contact this, we can't really read it, we don't 'translate' the Dhamma correctly. We still think 'this is me, this is mine.' We attach to things and invest them with meaning. When we do this, we can't yet disentangle from them; the involvement deepens and the mess gets worse and worse. If we know that there is no self, that body and mind are really anatta, as the Buddha taught, then when we keep on investigating, eventually we will come to realisation of the actual condition of selflessness. We will genuinely realise that there is no self or other.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTIC OF FIRE ELEMENT

Sometimes when the sun shines and the fan stops, then you may observe 'hot, hot'. We have to take some time to observe it (i.e. to be patient) until it has stopped. The more we observe it, the deeper the concentration on it. The deeper the concentration becomes, the more penetrating our insight into it. Then we come to realise that it is just 'hot'. We are not aware of the body, limb, hand or leg. What we are realising at that time is just heat, 'hot, hot', that's all. When we see it is just 'heat' or feeling of 'hot' without being conscious of the body or the limbs, it means we are realising the specific characteristics of fire element, *Tejo dhatu* without any idea of 'mine' or 'I'. That realisation of the specific characteristic of fire element removes the idea of 'I' or 'you', a 'person' or a 'being'. Self identity has been removed. Then, however severe the heat may be, we are not affected by this heat because there is neither 'we', 'you' nor 'I'. What really exist at that moment is just 'heat' in your mind so there is no 'person', no 'being'. It is just the natural process of heat or fire element. Then we don't have attachment to it because what we see is just heat. We just don't have any aversion to it because we see it as just heat. If we take it to be a hand or a body, then we may think 'Oh, my body is very hot, my hands are very hot'. Then because of that 'my', you have the idea of an 'I', a 'person', a 'being'. *Sakkaya ditthi*, *Atta ditthi* comes to your mind.

Then you can't endure that heat which your body has because you don't see that heat as just heat. What you see is the hot body, the hot hand. Then you take this heat to be 'me' and 'mine'. Then you have the idea of a 'person' or a 'being'. That is why there arises aversion to that heat. That is also why there arises attachment to heat when you like it, for example during the winter. Why do you like it? Because you take it to be a 'person' or a 'being', an 'I' or a 'you'. If you see that heat as just a natural process of heat and you do not take it to be me or mine, then you don't need anything; air conditioning or central heating system.

So while you are sitting for meditation whatever feeling you have, heat or cold, you should observe each as they arise. Why do you need to observe heat and cold as they arise? To realise hotness of heat is its true nature; to realise coldness of cold is its true nature. What then is the true nature of heat or cold? The specific characteristic and the general characteristic of the fire element is their true nature. So if you observe either heat or cold at the moment of its arising and if your concentration is good enough you realise it separately from you and you realise it without being conscious of yourself or your body or your limbs. It means you are realising the natural process of heat as specific characteristic of fire element. Then you don't identify that heat with you and there is no idea of a person or a being. *Sakkaya ditthi*, *Atta ditthi* has been destroyed. All mental defilement arise dependent on the idea of 'I' or 'you', *Sakkaya ditthi, Atta ditthi*. When you don't have that idea of 'I' or 'you', there won't arise any mental defilement. If you are able to realise this is just natural process of heat or cold; this is just natural process of movement or motion, then you don't identify these processes with you, then there is no 'I' or 'mine' regarding the process.

Because you have removed idea of 'I' or 'mine', a person or a being regarding these processes of heat, cold, movement or motion, there won't arise any defilement at all. This is because in the realisation of natural process of heat, cold, movement or motion, there isn't anything to be attached to it or to have aversion to it. But if we identify that natural process with 'us' or 'you', then there is a person who has desire to be cold, to have the fan turning. That desire is a defilement. It arises dependent on the idea of 'I' who feels hot. That is why we need to realise the specific characteristic of at least these four primary material elements to remove the idea of individuality, personality, self or soul. That is why we have to be mindful of whatever arises in our body and mind as it really occurs. When we have realised the specific characteristics of these primary elements it is not so difficult for us to realise the specific or individual characteristic of mental states too. If we are able to realise the specific or individual characteristic of mental state, we don't take them to be a person or a being. Pleasure is merely pleasure. Feeling is merely feeling. Memory is merely memory. Thinking is merely thinking. They are all things which are 'merely' that. Happiness is merely happiness; suffering is merely suffering. Good is merely good, evil is merely evil. Everything exists 'merely' thus. There is no real happiness or real suffering. ***There are just the merely existing conditions.***

Merely happy, merely suffering, merely hot, merely cold, merely a being or a person.

You should keep looking to see that things are only so much. Only earth, only water, only fire, only air. We should keep on 'reading' these things and investigating this point. Eventually **our perception will change; we will have a different feeling about things**. The conviction that there is self and things belonging to self will gradually come undone. When this sense of things is removed, then the opposite perception will keep increasing steadily. So we will have the exact same feeling about our existence in this world. We will not cry or moan over things. We will not be tormented or burdened by them. They remain the same things as they were before, but our feeling and understanding of them has changed. Now our knowledge will be exalted and we will see truth. We will have attained supreme vision and authentic knowledge of that Dhamma which we ought to know.

The Buddha taught the Dhamma that we ought to know and to see. Where is the Dhamma that we ought to know and see? **It is right here within us, this body and mind.** We have it already; we should come to know and see it. Wherever the mind has a lot of attachment, just there will we experience intense suffering, intense grief, intense difficulty. The place we experience the most problems is the place we have the most attraction, longing and concern. Please try to resolve this. Now, while you still have life and breath, keep on looking at it and reading it, until you are able to 'translate' it and solve the problem.

Whatever we are experiencing as part of our lives now, one day we will be parted from it. So don't just pass the time. **Practise spiritual cultivation.** Take this parting, this separation and loss, as your object of contemplation right now, in the present, until you are clever and skilled in it, until you can see that it is ordinary and natural. When there is anxiety and regret over it, have the wisdom to recognise the limits of this anxiety and regret, knowing what they are according to the truth. If you can consider things in this way, then **wisdom will arise**. But people generally do not want to investigate. Whenever suffering occurs, wisdom can arise there, if we investigate. Wherever pleasant or unpleasant experience happens, wisdom can arise there. If we know happiness and suffering for what they really are, then we know the Dhamma. If we know the Dhamma, we know the world clearly; **if we know the world clearly, we know the Dhamma.**

To put the teaching of the Buddha in a nutshell, the point is to transform one's view. It is possible to change it. It only requires looking at things, and then it happens. Having been born, we will experience aging, illness, death and separation. These things are right here. We don't need to look up at the sky or down at the earth. The Dhamma that we need to see and to know can be seen right here within us, every moment of every day. When there is a birth, we are filled with joy. When there is a death, we grieve. That's how we spend our lives. These are the things we need to know about, but we still have not really looked into them and seen the truth. We are stuck deep in this ignorance. We ask, when will we get the chance to see the Dhamma; but it is right here to be seen in the present. This is the Dhamma we should learn about and see. This is what the Buddha taught about. He did not teach about gods and demons and nagas, protective deities, jealous demigods, nature spirits and the like. He taught the things that one should know and see. These are truths that we really should be able to realise. External phenomena are like this, exhibiting the three characteristics. Internal phenomena, i.e., this body, are like this, too. The truth can be seen in the hair, nails, skin and teeth. Previously they flourished. Now they are diminished. The hair thins and becomes gray. It is like this. Do you see? Or will you say it is something you can't see? You certainly should be able to see with a little investigation.

If we really take an interest in all of these and contemplate seriously, we can gain genuine knowledge. If these were something that could not be done, the Buddha would not have bothered to talk about it. How many tens and hundreds of thousands of his followers have come to realisation? If one is really keen on looking at things, one can come to know. The Dhamma is like that. Normally we speak in terms of *atta*, self, talking about me and mine, you and yours, but the mind can remain uninterruptedly in the realisation of *anatta*, selflessness. Think about it. When we talk to children, we speak in one way; when dealing with adults, we speak in another way. If we use words appropriate to children to speak with adults, or use adults' words to speak with children, it won't work out. In the proper use of conventions, we have to know when we are talking to children. It can be appropriate to talk about me and mine, you and yours, and so forth, but inwardly the mind is Dhamma, dwelling in realisation of anatta. You should have this kind of foundation.

If we really consider all of this and investigate thoroughly to know the truth, then we will enter the correct path. Our way of living will become correct. Thinking will be correct. Our action and speech will be correct. Why is it that we have suffering? Because of lack of knowledge, not knowing where things begin and end, not understanding the causes; this is ignorance. When there is this ignorance, then various desires arise, and, driven by them, we create the causes of suffering. Then the result must be suffering. When you gather firewood and light a match to it, and then you expect not to have any heat, what are your chances? You are creating a fire, aren't you? This is origination itself.

Nibbana paccayam hotu - one need not aim at anything or wish for anything at all. ***Just aim for Nibbana***. All manner of becoming and birth, merit and virtue in the worldly way do not reach there. Making merits and skillful kamma, hoping it will cause us to attain to some better state, we don't need to be wishing for a lot of things; just aim directly for Nibbana. Wanting sila, wanting tranquility - we just end up in the same old place- it's not necessary to desire these things - we should just wish for the place of cessation. Back and forth through the rounds of births, that is all, just changing appearances, appearing with a different face next time, but we don't know it. Just coming and going, going and returning in the rounds of samsara, not really going anywhere. It is just staying there. So the Buddha said, ***Nibbana paccayam hotu; let your only aim be Nibbana.*** Strive hard to accomplish this.

But the important point, really, is that we have life now, in the present. We are experiencing the results of past deeds right now. When beings are born into the world, that is the results of past actions appearing. Whatever happiness or suffering beings have in the present are the fruits of what they have done previously. Born into this world, one can transcend the world. Beyond the world, knowing the world - this is the aim of the Buddha's teaching. He did not aim for people to suffer. He desired people to attain to peace, to know the truth of things and realise wisdom. This is Dhamma, knowing the nature of things. Whatever exists in the world is nature. There is no need to be in confusion about it. Wherever you are, the same laws apply.

MOMENTARY CONCENTRATION (Dr. Henepola Gunaratana.)

Whereas the sequence of training undertaken by the samatha-yanika meditator is evident and unproblematic, an uncertainty appears to have cropped up in the case of the Vipassana-yanika's approach. This uncertainty lies in the concentration he uses to provide a basis for insight. Concentration is needed in order to see and know things as they are. The standard order of practice repeated countless times throughout the canon is moral discipline, concentration and wisdom; with concentration declared to be the foundation for wisdom. The Buddha calls concentration the supporting condition for 'the knowledge and vision of things as they really are', while 'one who lacks right concentration is deprived of the supporting condition for knowledge and vision of things as they really are.'

Finally, in the sequence of the Seven Purification through which all meditators must pass, the Second Purification; Purification of Mind (cittavisuddhi); is shown to precede and support the five subsequent Purifications that begin with Purification of View (ditthivisuddhi). Purification of Mind is generally defined as access and absorption concentration, and the last Five Purifications as the wisdom of insight and the path. Since each Purification has to be fulfilled in due order before undertaking the next, the same problem surfaces of accounting for the concentration the Vipassana-yanika uses to arrive at insight. The solution to this problem is found in a type of concentration distinct from the access and absorption concentration pertaining to the vehicle of serenity. This type of mental unification is called; **'Momentary Concentration'** (khanika-samadhi). Despite its name, Momentary Concentration does not signify a single moment of concentration amidst a current of distracted thoughts. Rather, it denotes: ***A dynamic concentration which flows from object to object in the ever-changing flux of phenomena, retaining a constant degree of intensity and collectedness sufficient to purify the mind of the hindrances.*** Momentary Concentration arises in the samatha-yanika meditator simultaneously with his post-jhanic attainment of insight, but for the Vipassana-yanika; ***Momentary Concentration develops naturally and spontaneously in the course of his Insight Practice without his having to fix the mind upon a Single Exclusive Object. Hence, the follower of the vehicle of insight does not omit concentration altogether from his training, but develops it in a different manner from the practitioner of serenity.***

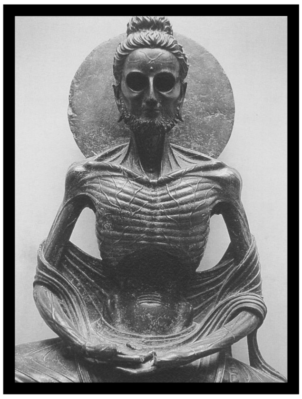
Skipping over the jhanas, he goes directly into contemplation on the five aggregates, and by observing them constantly from moment to moment acquires Momentary Concentration as an accompaniment of his investigations. This Momentary Concentration fulfills the same function as the basic jhana of the serenity-vehicle, providing the foundation of mental clarity needed for insight to emerge. The importance of Momentary Concentration in the vehicle of insight is testified to both by the classical Theravada exegetical literature and by modern exponents of the 'dry Vipassana" approach. Mahasi Sayadaw explains that a meditator begins the development of insight by attending to the diverse mental and bodily processes that become manifest to him, making the tactile process of the rising and falling of the abdomen his basic object of mindfulness.

At first, during the early part of his practice, his mind tends to be distracted by wandering thoughts, but with time his thought process of noting becomes well concentrated. When he can notice the objects that appear continuously, undisturbed by hindrances, his practice has arrived at Momentary Concentration: ***While practising the exercise of noting with 'unhindered mind', the noting mind will get more close to and fixed at whichever object is noted, and the act of noting will proceed without break. At that time there arises in him, in uninterrupted succession, 'the concentration of mind lasting for a moment', directed to each object noticed.*** The Sayadaw holds that this Momentary Concentration claims the place of Purification of Mind in the dry insight (Vipassana) worker's course of development. He states that though it 'has only momentary duration, its power of resistance to being overwhelmed by opposition corresponds to that of access concentration.

Momentary concentration is in contrast to One pointed concentration; it is a fluid type of mental collectedness consisting in the uninterrupted continuity of awareness engaged in noting the passing succession of objects. Its objects are varied and changing but its force of concentration remains constant. This force fixes the mind on the object as though fixing it in absorption, holding the hindrances at bay and building up power of mental purification. For this reason Momentary Concentration can be understood as implicitly included in access concentration in the standard definition of Purification of Mind as consisting in access and absorption.

Evam me sutam

ekam samayam bhagavà kuråsu viharati kammàsadammam nàma
kurånam nigamo. Tatra kho bhagavà bhikkhå àmantesi 'bhikkhavo'ti.
'Bhadante'ti te bhikkhu bhagavato paccassosum bhagavà
etadavoca:
Ekàyano ayam bhikkhave maggo sattànam visuddhiyà
sokapariddavànam samatikkamàya dukkhadomanassànam
atthangamàya nàyassa adhigamàya nibbànassa sacchikiriyàya,
yadidam cattàro satipatthànà.



Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Blessed One was living in Kurus, where there
was a market town of the Kurus, named Kammasadamma. There
the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus and
spoke as follows:
' This is the only way, bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the
overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain
and grief, for reaching the Noble Path, for the realisation of
Nibbana, namely:
The Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

COMPILED BY DEAN AMORY

Cover: meditating Shiva – Rishikesh statue - by Mariellen Ward.

http://media.breathedreamgo.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Shiva.jpg

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“Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without.”

(Buddha)

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Introduction

There has been an explosion of interest in mindfulness among psychotherapists and health care practitioners.

Training courses in mindfulness for people with either physical and mental health problems have been established throughout the world. These courses, generally involve 2-3 hour group meetings that occur weekly over an 8-week period. Participants learn to bring mindfulness meditation and basic Yoga exercises into their everyday lives and the impact of these practices on their health is carefully recorded.

Research findings have concluded, time and time again, that when some people practice mindfulness regularly, there are measurable positive changes in their lives.

- People who suffer chronic pain become able to deal with this without medication;
- People prone to repeated episodes of severe depression stop relapsing, without the aid of medication.
- People with high levels of stress and tension learn to bring down their anxiety levels and enjoy a much better quality of life.
- Studies in the States have also demonstrated the potential of Vispassna meditation and mindfulness-based programs in relapse prevention for people with addiction disorders (Marlatt et al., 2004).

(Source: The Mindfulness Program by TONY BATES and FAYE SCANLAN For Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health).

Time to find out for myself, I thought. So, please join me on this exploration tour and experience with me!

What is Mindfulness?

Have you ever started eating a snack bar, taken a couple of bites, then noticed all you had left was an empty packet in your hand? Or been driving somewhere and arrived at your destination only to realize you remember nothing about your journey? Most people have! These are common examples of "mindlessness," or "going on automatic pilot." In our modern, busy lives, we constantly multi task. Its easy to lose awareness of the present moment as when we become lost in our efforts to juggle work, home, finances, and other conflicting demands.

As humans we are often "not present" in our own lives. We often fail to notice the good things about our lives, fail to hear what our bodies are telling us, or poison ourselves with toxic self critics.

Human minds are easily distracted, habitually examining past events and trying to anticipate the future. Becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings and sensations may not sound like an obviously helpful thing to do, however learning to do this in a way that suspends judgment and self-criticism can have an incredibly positive impact on our lives.

Mindfulness means being attentive to whatever you are doing when you are doing it. By settling your attention on whatever is happening in the present moment, you gradually calm your mind, and relax your body.

With your awareness grounded in the present moment, you are less vulnerable to being drawn into negative rumination about the past or the future.

You begin to see what is actually happening in the here and now.

Positive elements in your life are experienced with greater appreciation; and in the stillness that develops through mindfulness practice, creative solutions can emerge to guide you in responding to challenging dilemmas. (DEORA)

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to, and seeing clearly whatever is happening in our lives. It will not eliminate life's pressures, but it can help us respond to them in a calmer manner that benefits our heart, head, and body. It helps us recognize and step away from habitual, often unconscious emotional and physiological reactions to everyday events. It provides us with a scientifically researched approach to cultivating clarity, insight, and understanding. Practicing mindfulness allows us to be fully present in our life and work, and improve our quality of life.

An important aspect of mindfulness is "remembering." This does not refer to memory of past events. Rather, it means remembering to be aware and pay attention, highlighting the importance of intention in mindfulness practice. Each moment we remind ourselves: "Remember—be aware!"

But "mindfulness" means more than being passively aware, or being aware for awareness' sake. The Buddhist scholar, John Dunne (2007) has pointed out that awareness, attention, and remembering (sati) are present when a sniper, with malice in his heart, takes aim at an innocent victim. Obviously this is not what we're trying to cultivate as psychotherapists, nor is it the goal of Buddhist psychology. Rather, the purpose of mindfulness in its ancient context is to eliminate needless suffering by cultivating insight into the workings of the mind and the nature of the material world. The mindfulness practitioner is actively working with states of mind in order to abide peacefully in the midst of whatever happens.

'Mindfulness' is a hot topic in Western psychology: increasingly recognized as an effective way to reduce stress, increase self-awareness, enhance emotional intelligence, and effectively handle painful thoughts and feelings.

Although mindfulness has only recently been embraced by Western psychology, mindfulness is not new. It's part of what makes us human — the capacity to be fully conscious and aware. Unfortunately, we are usually only in this state for brief periods of time, and are soon reabsorbed into familiar daydreams and personal narratives. The capacity for sustained moment-to-moment awareness, especially in the midst of emotional turmoil, is a special skill. Fortunately, it is a skill that can be learned.

Mindfulness is an elusive, yet central, aspect of the 2500 year-old tradition of Buddhist psychology. We can talk about mindfulness or write at length about it, but to truly understand mindfulness we have to experience it directly. This is because mindfulness points to something intuitive and pre-conceptual. With committed practice, every person can gradually figure out how to become more and more mindful in life, even in the face of significant suffering. Cultivating mindfulness is, and has always been, a deeply personal journey of discovery.it is an ancient practice found in a wide range of Eastern philosophies, including Buddhism, Taoism and Yoga. Mindfulness involves consciously bringing awareness to your here-and-now experience with openness, interest, and receptiveness. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a world authority on the use of mindfulness training in the management of clinical problems, defines it as: "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."

Mindfulness is about waking up, connecting with ourselves, and appreciating the fullness of each moment of life. Kabat-Zinn calls it, "The art of conscious living." It is a profound way to enhance psychological and emotional resilience, and increase life satisfaction.

This return to the present moment requires practice. It is achieved principally by using the breath as a focus, following the in-breath for the full duration of your in-breath, and the out-breath for the full duration of the out-breath. Yoga, body scan and mindful walking are also ways to bring our attention to the present moment. All of these methods work best when undertaken with an attitude of kindness towards oneself, and with a non-judgmental acceptance of whatever one is feeling or not feeling in any given moment.

Mindfulness is the act of deliberately paying attention in a particular way. This particular way involves bringing the attention back to the present moment and being non judgmental.

So we become aware of the full range of experience including sensory impressions, thoughts, imagery emotions, urges and impulses. We even can become aware of the quality of mindfulness itself.

Because we do not judge the content or the processes of our mind we become freer to observe without identifying with the contents of our thoughts. It is as if we are watching the stream of consciousness rather than swimming in it and being buffeted by its eddies and currents.

The ABC of Mindfulness

A is for awareness – Becoming more aware of what you are thinking and doing – what's going on in your mind and body.

B is for "just Being" with your experience. Avoiding the tendency to respond on auto-pilot and feed problems by creating your own story.

C is for seeing things and responding more wisely. By creating a gap between the experience and our reaction to, we can make wiser choices.

Definitions of Mindfulness

"Bringing one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment-to-moment basis." (Marlatt & Kristeller)

"Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn).

"Consciously bringing awareness to your here-and-now experience, with openness, interest and receptiveness." (The Happiness Trap)

The benefits of Mindfulness include

Helping individuals to:

- Recognize, slow down or stop automatic and habitual reactions.
- Respond more effectively to complex or difficult situations.
- See situations more clearly
- Become more creative
- Achieve balance and resilience at work and at home
- be fully present, here and now
- experience unpleasant thoughts and feelings safely
- become aware of what you're avoiding

- become more connected to yourself, to others and to the world around you
- increase self-awareness
- become less disturbed by and less reactive to unpleasant experiences
- learn the distinction between you and your thoughts
- have more direct contact with the world, rather than living through your thoughts
- learn that everything changes; that thoughts and feelings come and go like the weather
- have more balance, less emotional volatility
- experience more calm and peacefulness
- develop self-acceptance
- improve focus and concentration
- increase self-awareness
- reduce the impact and influence of stressful thoughts and feelings
- facilitate better relationships
- catch self-defeating behaviors, and substitute more effective ones
- become aware of self-defeating thought processes, and 'let them go'

All of this boils down to 3 major benefits: improved performance, reduced stress, and greater satisfaction in work and life.

How Mindfulness affects mind and body

Results of regular meditation:

- increases activity in a number of brain regions, including those parts involved in learning and memory processes, emotion regulation and perspective taking;
- improves psychological functions of attention, compassion and empathy;
- activates the parasympathetic nervous system, calming the autonomic nervous system and decreasing cortical;
- boosts the immune system;
- improves medical conditions including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, premenstrual syndrome and chronic pain; and
- improves psychological conditions such as anxiety, insomnia, phobias and eating disorders.

Do you want
permanent
change?

Mindfulness Practice

While it can be disturbing to notice how frequently we are mindless, and how much of our lives we wish away, there is also good news: mindfulness can be cultivated. Just as we can improve physical fitness through regular physical exercise, we can develop mindfulness through deliberate mental practices.

Mindfulness practices all involve some form of meditation. Especially in the West, misconceptions about meditation practice abound. It may therefore be helpful to examine some of the most common misunderstandings.

Not Having a Blank Mind:

While some concentration practices are designed to empty the mind of thought, this is not an aim of mindfulness practice. Nor do we wish to become stupid, or lose our analytical abilities. Instead, mindfulness practice involves training the mind to be aware of what it is doing at all times, including being aware that we are thinking when we think.

Not Becoming Emotionless:

Many people secretly hope that mindfulness practice will relieve them of the burden of emotion. Especially when in distress, the fantasy of becoming emotionless can be quite appealing. In reality, mindfulness practice often has quite the opposite effect. Because we practice noticing the contents of the mind, we come to notice our emotions more fully and vividly. Our ability to recognize how we feel increases as we relinquish normal defences, such as distracting ourselves from discomfort with entertainment or eating.

Not Withdrawing from Life:

Because most meditation practices were originally refined by monks, nuns, and hermits, people often assume that they involve withdrawing from living a full, interpersonally rich life. While there are certainly benefits to be derived from practicing mindfulness in a simplified environment, even in these settings one isn't exactly withdrawing. Instead, the vicissitudes of life are experienced more vividly, because we're taking the time to pay attention to our moment-to-moment experience.

Not Seeking Bliss:

The image of the spiritual master blissfully smiling while the rest of us struggle with existential reality is very appealing. Early in their meditation careers, many people become distressed when they find that their minds wander and they feel agitated or unsettled. While exceptionally pleasant states of mind do occur, in mindfulness meditation we allow them to arise and pass—not clinging to blissful states nor rejecting unpleasant ones.

Not Escaping Pain:

Rather than escaping pain, mindfulness practice helps us to increase our capacity to bear it. We deliberately abstain from automatic actions designed to make ourselves feel better. For example, if we are meditating and an itch arises, a typical instruction is to observe the itch and notice any impulses that arise (such as the urge to scratch)—but to not act on the urge. As a result, we actually experience pain and discomfort more vividly. This extends beyond itches and physical pain to include the full spectrum of emotional discomfort as well. As we explore and accept these unpleasant experiences, our capacity to bear them increases. We also discover that painful sensations are distinct from the suffering that accompanies them. We see that suffering arises when we react to pain with resistance, protest, or avoidance rather than moment-to-moment acceptance.

Forms of Practice

There are many ways to cultivate awareness of current experience with acceptance. Not surprisingly, all of them involve repeated practice. If we want to improve our cardiovascular fitness, we might begin by integrating physical exercise into our everyday routine—taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or riding a bicycle instead of driving to work. If we want to become even more physically fit, we might set aside time to exercise formally, perhaps at a gym or health club. To really accelerate the process, we might go on a fitness-oriented vacation, in which much of the day is spent in vigorous exercise. Similar options are available for cultivating mindfulness.

Everyday Mindfulness:

This involves reminding ourselves throughout the day to pay attention to what is happening in the moment without radically altering our routines. It means noticing the sensations of walking when we walk, the taste of our food when we eat, and the appearance of our surroundings as we pass through them. The Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hahn suggests a number of techniques to enhance everyday mindfulness. For example, when the telephone rings, try just listening at first, attending to the tone and rhythm of the sound as one might listen to a musical instrument. Or while driving, when the red tail lights of another vehicle appear, try appreciating their colour and texture as one might in looking at a beautiful sunset.

Formal Meditation Practice:

This involves setting aside time to go to the mental "gym." We regularly dedicate a certain period to sit quietly in meditation. There are many types of meditation that can cultivate mindfulness. Most involve initially choosing an object of attention, such as the breath, and returning our attention to that object each time the mind wanders. This develops a degree of calmness which, in turn, enables us to better focus the mind on the chosen object. Once some concentration is established, mindfulness meditation entails directing the mind to whatever begins to predominate in the mind—usually centring on how the event is experienced in the body. These objects of attention can be physical sensations such as an itch, ache, or sound; or emotional experiences as they manifest in the body, such as the tightness in the chest associated with anger, or the lump in the throat that comes with sadness. Regardless of the chosen object of attention, we practice being aware of our present experience with acceptance.

Retreat Practice:

This is the "vacation" that is dedicated entirely to cultivating mindfulness. There are many styles of meditation retreats. Most involve extended periods of formal practice, often alternating sitting meditation with walking meditation. They are usually conducted in silence, with very little interpersonal interaction, except for occasional interviews with teachers. All of the activities of the day—getting up, showering, brushing teeth, eating, doing chores—are done in silence, and used as opportunities to practice mindfulness. As one observer put it, the first few days of a retreat are "a little like being trapped in a phone booth with a lunatic." We discover how difficult it is to be fully present. The mind is often alarmingly active and restless, spinning stories about how well we're doing and how we compare to others. Memories of undigested emotional events enter, along with elaborate fantasies about the future. We get to vividly see how our minds create suffering in an environment where all of our needs are tended to. Many people find that the insights that occur—during even a single week-long intensive meditation retreat—are life transforming.

The effects of mindfulness practice seem to be dose-related. If one does a little bit of everyday practice, a little bit of mindfulness is cultivated. If one does more everyday practice, and adds to this regular formal practice and retreat practice, the effects are more dramatic. While this has long been evident to meditators, it is beginning to be documented through scientific research (Lazar et al, 2005).

Meditation Practice:

When someone says, "I do mindfulness meditation," what is he or she actually doing? There are three key meditation skills often subsumed under the heading of "mindfulness meditation:"

Concentration Meditation: This technique has a focal object, such as the breath or a mantra. The instruction is, "When you notice that your mind has wandered, gently bring it back to [the object]." Concentration meditation produces a feeling of calmness. The Pali word most associated with concentration practice is samatha, while the traditional word for meditation is bhavana, which means "developing." "Concentration meditation" is a translation of samatha bhavana, the cultivation of concentration. The "relaxation response" (Benson & Klipper, 2000) is well-known example of this meditation approach.

Mindfulness Meditation: The instruction for mindfulness meditation is, "Notice whatever predominates in awareness, moment to moment." Here the intention is not to choose a single object of focus, but rather to explore changing experience. The skill of mindfulness cultivates insight into the nature of one's personal conditioning (e.g., "fear of disapproval," "anger at authority") and the nature of mental reality ("it's changing," "it's often unsatisfactory," "the 'self' is fluid").

This is primarily what distinguishes "mindfulness meditation" from other forms of meditation, such as concentration meditation and various forms of visualization meditation, and it is a unique contribution of Buddhist psychology. The Pali words for mindfulness meditation are vipassana bhavana, which translates well as the cultivation of insight or "insight meditation." Western researchers and clinicians usually use the expression "mindfulness meditation" to refer to this practice.

Making matters a bit more complicated, sati is actually cultivated by, and necessary for, both concentration and mindfulness meditation techniques. That is, we need to know where the mind is to concentrate on either a single object or many arising objects. Since the mind is actively engaged with a wider range of experiences during mindfulness meditation, it can be said that sati is more deliberately developed in this particular practice.

During mindfulness or insight meditation, the meditator can always return to concentration practice to stabilize attention if he or she becomes lost in daydreams and discursive thinking. In this regard, concentration practice (samatha) facilitates mindfulness or insight (vipassana) practice.

Lovingkindness Meditation: Lovingkindness is the emotional quality associated with mindfulness. Translated from the Pali word, metta, lovingkindness meditation can be a form of concentration meditation. The practitioner returns attention again and again to phrases such as "May I and all beings be safe, happy, healthy, and live with ease." This technique allows the person to soften into and allow arising experience to be just as it is. It is cultivating the intention to be loving and kind, rather than superimposing warm feelings on our moment-to-moment experience. The emotional flavor of affectionate awareness typically follows our kindly intentions. Lovingkindness (feeling safe, peaceful, healthy, and free from suffering) keeps the function of mindfulness practice clear in the mind of the practitioner. It is a quality of mind that ideally pervades the other meditation practices. Therefore, while practicing concentration meditation, we work to receive mental distractions with openheartedness rather than sternness; when practicing mindfulness or insight meditation, we greet all mental contents like welcome visitors.

When our sati (mindfulness) is strong, we can choose to switch fluidly among metta (lovingkindness), samatha (concentration), or vipassana (mindfulness or insight) practices, as needed, even in a single sitting of meditation. For example, if dealing with psychological trauma, we can notice when we are overwhelmed and can choose to redirect attention to the breath or external sights and sounds (samatha). We can also add some lovingkindness (metta) to our experience to re-establish a measure of calmness. When we feel more stable, we can open up the field of awareness again to observe how the trauma memories are experienced in the mind and body (vipassana). In other words, the three skills—concentration, mindfulness, and lovingkindness—can be selectively emphasized in meditation and daily life to reduce suffering and increase happiness.

Common Usage: To make matters even more confusing, the general public in Western culture uses the term "mindfulness" loosely to refer to every variety of formal and informal secular Buddhist practice. Under this label, we not only have the different meditation skills just mentioned—lovingkindness, concentration, and mindfulness or insight—but also visualization techniques and innumerable, informal meditation strategies to deal with everyday life. Visualization meditations include practices that cultivate equanimity, such as imagining oneself as a solid mountain unaffected by the wind and weather, or as a deep pond unperturbed by the waves.

As mindfulness is incorporated into diverse fields such as health care, education, and business, the term will probably continue to accrue an increasing array of meanings. Within clinical psychology, "mindfulness" is already used interchangeably with "acceptance" to describe the third wave of behavioral treatments. In the field of education, Ellen Langer (1989) describes "mindfulness" as a cognitive process that implies openness, curiosity, and awareness of more than one perspective. In the business world, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee (2005) encourage "mindfulness practice" to "observe emotional reality" (p.124) in an organization and "avoid narrow focus and constant multitasking" (p.131).

Helping keep people resilient

Numerous studies also suggest that mindfulness makes a big difference to our resilience levels.

Daily mindfulness practice

Pick an activity that you do most days or every day, such as eating breakfast or travelling to work. Choose something you have to do anyway, but set the intention to be mindful when doing this activity.

Bringing your attention to the present moment - not dwelling in the past or planning for the future. Instead, being open to and curious about what emerges. Really explore what you find. Remember to be compassionate towards yourself and others.

Your mind will wander off - that's fine, that's what minds do. When that happens, gently bring your thoughts back to whatever it is you're doing and congratulate yourself for noticing your mind has wandered.

You may find you come to relish this time, seeing it as pressing the pause button. You may find you notice more about whatever it is you're engaged in. Or you may find you encounter "unpleasant" feelings such as boredom or sadness.

Whatever comes up, just notice it, explore it, turn towards it and gently let go, without judgment, but with curiosity and compassion.

Practising mindfulness helps us develop the "attentional control" that is important in resilience and high performance, according to research by David Marchant, a senior lecturer in sport and exercise psychology at Edge Hill University in Scotland.

According to Marchant, although attentional control is well understood and well researched in sports, it is only recently that it has been applied in the working world.

Another study by Kabat-Zinn found that people who had completed an eight-week MBSR program scored highly on a number of resilient traits. Participants felt happier, more energised and less stressed. They felt their lives were more meaningful, that they had more control over their lives and were more likely to see challenges as opportunities rather than threats.

One of the reasons mindfulness helps people become more resilient, less stressed and more creative is because it brings us into "approach mode".

When we believe we are under threat, we switch to "avoidance mode" - think running away from a sabre-toothed tiger. But we can often remain stuck there even though we are no longer under a real threat, such as when we have the sensation that an avalanche of emails is as dangerous as the sabre-toothed tiger.

Mindfulness helps people cope with change and uncertainty, avoid rigid or scattered thinking and become more comfortable with not knowing. It improves a person's ability to respond rather than react and to think more clearly and strategically.

Moving into "approach state" improves confidence and the ability to trust our own decisions, as well as noticing more data.

And those who meditate are more able to make rational rather than emotionally charged decisions, according to research by Kirk et al.

Research by the Institute of Mindful Leadership found that for 93% of leaders surveyed, mindfulness training helped them create space for innovation. Some 89% said it enhanced their ability to listen to themselves and others, and nearly 70% said it helped them think strategically.

Mindfulness helps us make decisions more quickly as well as more rationally, through helping us to let go of our evaluations, according to research by Langer, who also underlines how mindfulness helps us be more creative.

Meditation promotes divergent creative-style thinking, studies such as the one by Colzato et al suggest. It also improves insight into problem solving, according to research by Ostafin and Kassman. Mindfulness helps us to be less self-critical and more curious, to notice new things and give up preconceived mindsets, thus adding fuel to the creativity tank.

It helps employees act more ethically and enhances their emotional intelligence - in particular, self-awareness, self-management and social awareness. It does this through elements including: "checking in" to our emotions, thoughts and bodily sensations on a regular basis; practising attentional control; improving the ability to step back and think and act more rationally; and by enhancing compassion.

One study by business school INSEAD showed that being exposed to mindfulness training and coaching encourages managers and leaders to behave in a more socially responsible way.

Mindfulness is at the heart of a number of popular leadership models, including Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee's resonant leadership, James Scouller's three levels of leadership, Otto Scharmer's theory U and Lee and Roberts' authentic leadership model.

Since the late 1970's there have been more than 1000 publications documenting medical and psychological research on mindfulness which demonstrate its validity and breadth of application.

There are currently two well respected formal approaches to Mindfulness: MBSR & MBCT. MBSR & MBCT are taught using a standard curriculum, and all teachers follow a formalized development route. Other approaches to mindfulness can be equally effective and valid, but are less likely to be well regulated.

What does mindfulness involve?

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn , "mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non judgmentally."

Mindfulness practitioners learn how to pay attention on purpose by practicing specially developed mindfulness meditation practices & mindful movements. With practice, practitioners learn to slow down or stop brain chatter and automatic or habitual reactions, experiencing the present moment as it really is.

Through mindfulness, we develop "street smarts" to manage the mind (Bhikkhu, 2007). It helps us to recognize when we also need to cultivate other mental qualities—such as alertness, concentration, loving kindness, and effort—to skillfully alleviate suffering. For example, if in meditation we are being self-critical, we may want to add a dose of compassion; if we are feeling lazy, we might want to try to raise the level of energy in the mind or body. Mindfulness alone is not sufficient to attain happiness, but it provides a solid foundation for the other necessary factors (Rapgay & Brystrisky, 2007). In the classical literature, mindfulness was usually discussed in terms of its function, not as a goal in itself. Mindfulness is ultimately part of a project designed to uproot entrenched habits of mind that cause unhappiness, such as the afflictive emotions of anger, envy, or greed, or behaviors that harm ourselves and others.

When practising mindfulness, everyone, however much they practise, will experience thoughts creeping in to their heads uninvited. This is fine - its just what brains do, but how we respond to these thoughts is important.

If we start to think about the thought, or get annoyed with ourselves for not being able to retain our focus, it stops us paying attention and takes us away from the present moment. If we just acknowledge the thought and let it go without judgment, we retain our focus on being in the present moment.

As with all new skills, the more we practise it, the easier it becomes. Canadian psychologist, Donald Hebb coined the phrase "neurons that fire together, wire together". In other words, the more we practise mindfulness, the more we develop neuro-pathways in the brain associated with being mindful, which make it easier to be fully in the present moment.

By learning to experience the present moment as it really is, we develop the ability to step away from habitual, often unconscious emotional and physiological reactions to everyday events, see things as they really are and respond to them wisely rather than on auto pilot.

Who is mindfulness for?

Mindfulness is for everyone from all walks of life, young or old. Mindfulness is not a religion and there is no necessary religious component to mindfulness - anyone, with any belief system, can enjoy the benefits of mindfulness.

Although Mindfulness may have had its origins in the east, the benefits of mindfulness and meditation are now relatively mainstream and the scientific community has found data positively correlating mindfulness and meditation to stress reduction

In the last 30 years, the most widely recognized Mindfulness practices, MBSR & MBCT have been developed and researched in the West. Recent neuroscience & clinical research has helped explain why mindfulness meditation practices work, which has accelerated its use within traditional medical circles as a powerful healing tool even further.

What are the origins of mindfulness?

Mindfulness has its origins in ancient meditation practices.

The cultivation of mindfulness in a rigorous way comes from a tradition with ancient roots and lofty goals. These origins are important to understand so that modern clinicians don't inadvertently miss its profound potential for psychological transformation.

As far back as four thousand years ago, we find images of yogis in ancient India sitting cross-legged in meditation, gazing inward with eyes half closed. Training the mind was understood as the principle means of achieving mental and physical health, emotional equanimity, and perfecting the human condition.

Mindfulness, as we are coming to know it in the West, was most clearly described in ancient times in the teachings of the historical Buddha. According to tradition, he was born a prince some 2500 years ago. At the age of 29, he renounced a life of comfort and privilege to undertake rigorous mental and physical disciplines for seven years. Finally, at age 36, he experienced a breakthrough of understanding that profoundly re-ordered his mind. He wandered from place to place for the next 40 years exhibiting behaviors devoid of the usual human propensities toward attachment, aversion or delusion. The psychological teachings he left behind — including how to cultivate mindfulness — are still accessible to us today.

For the Buddha, the mind and body are seen as the product of material causes, lacking the divine essence that was assumed by the Indo-European religions of his time. Nonetheless, in the Buddha's view, the body and mind can be the vehicle for a profound experience of transcendence. Rather than breaking through to something divine, however, this experience results from a radical transformation of the mind. Consciousness itself, though conditioned, can be purified to such an extent that it entirely understands itself and its conditioning. The result is not only a deep sense of personal well-being, but also the possibility of a more evolved way of being human.

...in the Buddha's view, the body and mind can be the vehicle for a profound experience of transcendence.

The primary interest of this tradition is the quality of consciousness in the present moment. How exactly is the mind and body manifesting here and now? Consciousness arises from a whole network of interdependent factors, including all of the details of our genetic makeup and personal history. Each moment of consciousness, in turn, has an impact upon our subsequent beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. Knowing both the causes and the effects of a moment of consciousness allows us to participate intentionally in the process of living; to steer a course away from suffering and toward healthier states.

What the Buddha saw with great lucidity on the night of his awakening was the workings of his own mind. His insights have profound implications for modern psychotherapy, as they reveal how our minds construct our experience moment by moment, and how these constructions can lead to suffering.

The following description is not for the faint-hearted—it is a radically new psychology for many readers, and somewhat complicated, so we encourage you to consider it slowly.

How We Construct Our Experience

The Buddha saw that all experience involves a process in which the raw data streaming into the mind through the sensory organs or "sense doors" is compiled and synthesized into a virtual world of meaning. There are six sense doors in all: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, with the mind itself viewed as the sixth. There are also five primary categories, or systems, whereby the information flowing through these sense doors is processed.

The first category is material form, which acknowledges that the mind and body have a material, biological foundation. The next is consciousness, or the act of becoming aware of an object by means of one of the six sense organs (again with the mind as the sixth organ). At this stage the eye sees, the ear hears, the tongue tastes, etc.

The third and fourth systems, which shape how consciousness manifests, are perception and feeling. Perception identifies what is experienced through a series of associations, interpreting incoming data in the light of historically learned patterns of recognition. For example, you can recognize just two dots and a curved line to be a face?, or identify the object in your hands to be a book. "Feeling" provides an affect tone for each moment of cognition, either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. This is a hedonic assessment of each object's value to the organism. In every moment, we either like, dislike, or aren't interested in what we perceive.

The fifth and final component of the construction of experience is called formations and reflects the intentional stance we take toward all objects that we perceive and toward which we have feelings. Volition or intention is the executive function of the mind which initiates conscious or unconscious choices. Whereas the first four systems yield a sense of what is happening at any given moment, the fifth decides what we are going to do about it.

How do these processes unfold together?

Imagine that you're hungry, and you open the refrigerator door. The eye sees patterns of light, dark, and color in the visual field, which are quickly organized by the brain and perceived as a freshly made sandwich. Instantaneously a positive feeling toward the sandwich arises, and an intention forms to pick it up and eat it. This is soon followed by the behavior of actually taking a bite. Consciousness creates and responds to our reality so quickly that the process is usually unconscious.

Intentions and the behaviors that follow from them tend to become habitual and turn into dispositions. Dispositions are the residue of previous decisions, stored in memory as habits, learned behaviors, personality traits, etc., and provide historical precedents for how to respond to each newly arising moment. Feedback loops develop, whereby one's present response to any situation is both shaped by previous experience and goes on to mold the dispositions that will influence future responses. If we enjoyed this and other sandwiches in the past, we may develop the habit of reflexively picking up and eating sandwiches, even when we're not really hungry.

Putting this all together, the six sense doors and five systems interact simultaneously to form a dynamic interdependently arising process of mind and body, constructing meaning from an ever-changing barrage of environmental information. In each moment, which can be measured in milliseconds, all this arises concurrently, organizes around a particular bit of data, and then passes away.

One unique feature of Buddhist psychology is that consciousness is regarded as an unfolding process, or an occurring event, rather than as an existing entity. Nothing permanent abides (and there is no enduring "me" to be found) because every "thing" is a series of interrelated events. The everyday sense that we (and other beings) have separate existence comes from the fact that each moment of cognition is followed by another moment of cognition, yielding the subjective sense of a stream of consciousness. We have simply learned to connect the snapshots together into a coherent narrative. This is like the illusion of continuous action that our minds create out of separate frames in a movie. Among the great insights of the Buddhist tradition is not only that this is all happening below the threshold of ordinary awareness, but also that this process can unfold in either healthy and unhealthy ways, depending on the skills of its handler.

This analysis of human experience has important and radical clinical implications. It suggests that our reality, including the sense of "self" around which so much personal psychology is centered, is based on a fundamental misunderstanding. It is as though we believed that a powerful automobile like a Ferrari was a living being—until we saw it disassembled on the floor of a workshop. When we know the component parts and how they're put together, we can never look at a Ferrari in quite the same way. Similarly, seeing the way the "self" is constructed can help both us and our patients loosen our identification with the changing kaleidoscope of thoughts and feelings that arise in the mind, allowing us to live more flexible, adaptive, happier, productive lives.

A Physician of the Mind

The Buddha sometimes refers to himself as a physician, and to his teaching as a kind of medicine. The illness he is treating is the fact that consciousness is continually influenced by patterns of conditioning that inevitably result in unhappiness, frustration, and disappointment. This is certainly an observation familiar to the modern psychotherapist. Rather than changing brain chemistry by pharmaceuticals or probing past traumas arresting normal development, however, the Buddha's approach is to help the patient gain direct insight into the nature of experience.

This takes many forms.

One track is to notice the extent to which the patterns of conditioning we acquire, through learned behaviors, conditioned responses, or cultural osmosis, are for the most part built upon certain illusions or even delusions. Foremost of these are our remarkably robust habit of taking what is impermanent and subject to change to be stable or reliable; believing that the satisfaction or gratification of desires is sustainable for longer than a few moments when, because of the former point, it is not; and projecting again and again onto the field of experience the notion of a person or agent that owns, controls, or consists of what is happening. In other words, we continuously delude ourselves into believing that we can hold onto what we want and get rid of what we don't want, despite considerable evidence to the contrary. And on top of this, we delude ourselves into believing that a stable, independent "I" or "me" is running this show. To the extent these misperceptions can be gradually uncovered and corrected, considerable healing can occur.

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For example, there is the story of a monk who complained to his Zen teacher that he was an angry person. The teacher said, "Show me." Since the student was not angry at the moment, he could not show it, whereupon the teacher said, "See, you are not an angry person because you are not angry all the time." Such insight into the fluidity of experience and insubstantiality of identity can be enormously helpful to patients who have core beliefs about being unworthy, unlovable, unintelligent, and so forth.

Another approach is to recognize the fact that behavior is driven by desire, both conscious and unconscious, and to use that knowledge to diminish and eventually eliminate the role of desire in the moment-to-moment functioning of mind and body. The impulse to like some things and dislike others leads to pulling some objects of experience closer and pushing others farther away from a sense of self that sets itself apart from what is actually happening. Ironically, say the Buddhists, the very strategies we employ to overcome the perceived shortcomings of the world as we find it—embracing what offers pleasure and rejecting what brings pain—have the result of causing and perpetuating greater suffering. The solution is to practice letting go of desire itself, which can be replaced by an attitude of equanimity or acceptance. In clinical practice, we see countless examples that "what we resist persists," and how patients suffer terribly from wishing that things would be other than they are, i.e., from not facing "reality."

The underlying tendencies of both delusion and desire are deeply embedded in human nature, but can be successfully diminished and even eliminated. The word "Buddha" actually means "awake," and the historical Buddha was a man who undertook a program of transformation that resulted in his "awakening" from the misconceptions of delusion and the addictions of desire.

Source:

Mindfulness: What Is It? Where Did It Come From?
Ronald D. Siegel PsyD, Christopher K. Germer PhD, Andrew Olendzki, PhD
From Didonna, F. (Ed.) (2008). - Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness. New York: Springer.
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Mindfulness and therapy

Throughout history, human beings have sought to discover the causes of suffering and the means to alleviate it. Sooner or later, we all ask the same questions: “Why am I not feeling better?” “What can I do about it?” Inhabiting a physical body inevitably exposes us to pain associated with sickness, old age, and death. We also struggle emotionally when confronted with adverse circumstances, or with benign circumstances that we see as adverse. Even when our lives are relatively easy, we suffer when we don’t get what we want, when we lose what we once had, and when we have to deal with what we do not want. From birth until death, we are relentlessly trying to feel better.

Therapies in recent years have emphasised change and self-control. While these approaches have their place, they fall short in helping us to deal with cognitive and emotional distress that recurs over and over, despite our best efforts. Often, the most effective method of dealing with our negative moods is to gently acknowledge what’s happening and let them be, without being pulled into doing battle with ourselves. Mindfulness teaches us how to let ourselves ‘be’ by surrendering the need to change how we are. (DEORA)

Mindfulness is a deceptively simple way of relating to all experience that can reduce suffering and set the stage for positive personal transformation. It is a core psychological process that can alter how we respond to the unavoidable difficulties in life—not only to everyday existential challenges, but also to severe psychological problems such as suicidal ideation (Linehan, 1993), chronic depression (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002), and psychotic delusions (Bach and Hayes, 2002).

Mindfulness training has emerged as a powerful, evidence-based tool for enhancing psychological health. It has been clinically proven in a wide range of clinical disorders, including chronic pain, anxiety disorders, depression, PTSD, OCD, substance abuse, and borderline personality disorder.

Mindfulness approaches work best with people who are not caught up in a severe crisis.

Practical Applications of Psychotherapy

Psychotherapists are incorporating mindfulness into their work in many ways. We might imagine these on a continuum, from implicit to explicit applications—from those hidden from view to those that are obvious to the patient.

On the most implicit end is the practicing therapist. As just mentioned, when a therapist begins personally practicing mindfulness, his or her capacity for emotional attunement seems to increase. Regardless of theoretical orientation,

models of psychopathology, or modes of intervention, the therapist seems to be able to more carefully attend to and empathize with a patient's experience. The therapist's need to "fix" problems diminishes as he or she cultivates the capacity to be with another's pain. Therapists feel closer to their patients, developing compassion both by becoming aware of the universality of suffering, and by seeing more clearly their interconnection with others. Research in this area is just beginning (Grepmair, Mitterlehner, Loew, & Nickel, 2006; Grepmair, Mitterlehner, Loew, & Nickel, 2007)

Next along the continuum is the practice of mindfulness-informed psychotherapy (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). This is treatment informed by the insights that derive from Buddhist psychology and mindfulness practice. The therapist's understanding of psychopathology and the causes of human suffering change as a result of observing his or her own mind in meditation practice. Insights such as understanding the arbitrary and conditioned nature of thought, seeing the counterproductive effects of trying to avoid difficult experience, and noticing the painful consequences of trying to buttress our sense of separate self, all have an impact on how we approach our patients' problems.

Finally, the most explicit application of mindfulness to psychotherapy is mindfulness-based psychotherapy (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). Mindfulness-based therapists actually teach mindfulness practices to patients to help them work with their psychological difficulties. A host of mindfulness-based interventions are currently being developed for a wide range of clinical problems. Sometimes the patient is taught a traditional meditation practice, and other times that practice is customized for the patient's particular diagnosis, personality style, or life circumstances.

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Mindfulness and coaching

Mindfulness is a hot topic in coaching. Experts increasingly recognize that developing mindfulness skills is an effective way to improve performance, reduce stress, enhance emotional intelligence, increase life satisfaction, and develop leadership skills. These experts include such luminaries as Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence, and Richard Boyatzis, author of Resonant Leadership.

The ACT model, with its emphasis on mindfulness, values and action, is ideally suited for executive coaching, life coaching, and sports coaching. Values provide inspiration, motivation, and direction. Mindfulness skills provide many benefits, including the ability to reduce stress, rise above self-limiting beliefs, improve focus, develop self-awareness, facilitate calmness, and handle difficult emotions such as frustration, resentment, boredom and anxiety. ACT interventions can be incorporated into other coaching models, or ACT can be used as its own self-contained model.

The Benefits of Mindfulness for Coaches

- Facilitates empathy, compassion, and unconditional positive regard.
- Allows you to stay focused and present, even when your client is not.
- Helps you stay grounded, centered and composed, even in the midst of clients' emotional turmoil
- Enables a healthy attitude to therapeutic outcomes: neither complacent nor overly-attached.
- Helps you maintain direction and focus for therapy.
- Increases your skills at observing your clients' responses.

Differences between Awareness, Consciousness and Mindfulness

Source: Ajahn Brahmali - http://community.dhammaloka.org.au/

Question from Eamonn McGrath:

I have been trying to find a clear definition of Awareness, Consciousness and Mindfulness and what are their fundamental differences?

Answer

1. Consiousness

Consciousness is that which allows you to be conscious of anything. Every waking moment of life (and in fact every moment of sleep as well) includes consciousness. Without consciousness there's not even nothing - just complete emptiness.

Observation by Suzanne Harrill at innerworkspublishing.com:

Consciousness is a very expansive thing to describe. One way to understand consciousness is that it is the Universal Intelligence (God, Universe) in which we all live and move and have our being. It is the Source of our existence, our creativity, imagination, intuition, inner knowing, and unconditional love; and it is what responds to our thoughts, feelings, and prayers. To expand our individual consciousness makes us more and more consciously aware.

One way to build conscious awareness is to learn to look below the surface of our experiences. I'll use an iceberg to illustrate consciousness. What is known and conscious to us relates to the part of the iceberg above the water. The larger part of the iceberg, however, is below the surface and unconscious to us. To improve the quality of our lives to become self-aware, it is important to go below the surface to look at our ego-personalities – the issues, patterns, conditioned responses, fears, habits, and attitudes that we want to change. Looking below the surface of our problems and issues, we find causes and, thus, have more information available to help us change, heal, and grow.

Consciousness is one of the five aggregates because it is such an important part - I would say the most important part - of what we are. Because consciousness, in the end, is what defines us - because we identify with it so powerfully - we also hold on to it very strongly.

As long as we have attachments and craving we will get reborn, and thus suffer. The only way to end suffering is therefore to overcome our attachment to consciousness.

To end our attachment to consciousness we first of all need to refine it. Deep states of samadhi are often referred to as refined states of consciousness. I guess this is what you mean when you refer to consciousness being "something to attain". Based on such refined states of consciousness, one is able to gain the insight that leads to the end of attachment.

Observation by Timothy A. Pychyl at www.psychologytoday.com
Timothy A. Pychyl, Ph.D., is an associate professor of psychology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, where he specializes in the study of procrastination.

Self-consciousness includes three general components: private and public self-consciousness and social anxiety. "Private self-consciousness is awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and private motivations, while public self-consciousness is awareness of oneself as a social object. The private self-consciousness factor is itself composed of two facets . . . Self-reflectiveness represents rumination about oneself, whereas internal state awareness reflects awareness of one's emotional states. Self-reflectiveness positively correlates with rumination, depression, and anxiety whereas internal state awareness negatively correlates with these variables . . . suggesting that self reflectiveness may be a maladaptive form of self-awareness, while internal state awareness may be neutral or adaptive" (p. 379).

2. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a particular degree and strength of awareness. It is the sort of awareness you have when the hindrances are weak, when the mind is clear and bright, and when there are few thoughts.

Mindfulness (sati in Pali) is a spiritual faculty that gives you a sense of being in charge of your mind. Instead of the hindrances dragging your mind into the past, the future and endless thinking, you are able to stay in the present moment and focus your mind on whatever object you wish to focus on. This is why mindfulness is required before meditation really takes off - only the mindful mind is able to focus on an object at will.

Observation by Suzanne Harrill at innerworkspublishing.com:

Mindfulness comes from the Buddhist tradition and is about paying attention to what is happening to us now, in the present moment. It is tuning-in to all experiences, both the good-feeling ones and the negative-feeling ones, in order to feel, learn, and know what is going on within. Instead of shying away from the negative, we stay present and really experience whatever is going on, just as we do when we have fun, joyful experiences. This builds self-awareness and leads to more aware choices in the future.

Much of the time we aren’t really paying attention to what is currently happening to us, or to the people with whom we spend time. Instead, we daydream about what we will do in the future or go over and over something in our mind that happened in the past. We find ourselves emotionally reacting to other people or situations when they surprise or bother us, rather than being able to make better choices with our words, actions, and responses.

When mindful, we really participate in our moment-to-moment experiences—feeling them, enjoying them, or learning from them. Practicing mindfulness moves us in the direction of greater self-awareness, which allows us the power of choice and to get the most out of our life day to day.

To summarize, there are two important ways to build consciousness and move us along on the path of self-awareness. One is to practise being more mindful in the moment and the second is to be more conscious of what is really going on below the surface of our experiences. Self-awareness really is the key to greater freedom and happiness.

Observation by Timothy A. Pychyl at www.psychologytoday.com

Mindfulness is a non-judgmental awareness of one's self, including awareness of perceptions, sensations, thoughts and emotions. As a non-judgmental process, mindful awareness also involves an acceptance of what is.

3. Awareness

Awareness is inherently powerful, and attention, which is focused awareness, is more powerful still. Just by becoming aware of what is occurring within and around us, we can begin to untangle ourselves from mental preoccupations and difficult emotions. Sometimes this can be quite simple, as in the case of a mentally retarded man who managed his anger outbursts by shifting his attention to the "soles of the feet" whenever he noticed he was angry (Singh, Wahler, Adkins, & Myers, 2003). By redirecting attention, rather than trying to control or suppress intense emotions, we can regulate how we feel.

Consciousness and mindfulness are standard translations of Pali words, whereas awareness is not. This means that the exact meaning of awareness will depend on how it is used, that is, which Pali word it refers to.

Sometimes awareness is used for sati, such as in "awareness of the breath", in which case it is simply equivalent to mindfulness. At other times it is used synonymously with consciousness, as in "six-sense awareness". At still other times the expression "full awareness" is used for sati-sampajañña. In this use the meaning is that you have a degree of wisdom about your actions: you know why you are doing something and how it leads to the desired goal.

Observation by Shayly Wright at www.barefootjourneys.net)

(Shayla Wright is a lover of inquiry, nondual intimacy and awareness.

She participates in life as a teacher, a master coach, a writer, and an evolutionary friend. She has spent a lifetime studying and teaching inquiry, presence, and the transformation of consciousness. She has a Phd in nondual philosophy, is a certified coach, has a teacher training degree in Soma Yoga, and has completed an in depth training in nondual coaching and therapy with Peter Fenner.)

Contrary to what many people assume, there is actually a big difference between the practice of learning to recognize and rest in awareness, and the practice of mindfulness. People often assume they are the same, and they are not. In mindfulness practice, we are focusing on the content of our moment to moment experience. In awareness, we are not really concerned with the contents--not focusing on them, and not trying to block them out either. Just letting them be as they are. Our focus is the open space, the boundless field of awareness, in which everything is happening. And of course we can't really focus on this awareness in the way we focus on an object, like our breath, or our feelings.

So awareness practice is much more about letting go of the impulse to grasp, to understand, to fixate on anything, and just relaxing into the openness of our own being, which is always here, as soon as we are willing to let go.

Observation by Federica, moderator of newbuddhist.com:

Consciousness means being in the present.
Awareness means you know you are in the present.

Observation by Suzanne Harrill at innerworkspublishing.com:

Awareness is everything that has brought you to this present moment—your beliefs, emotions, feelings, and reactions to all your life experiences. Awareness includes everything you have taken in and are taking in with your five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell, as well as using your sixth sense of intuition.

Much of our awareness is unconscious to us. As we study ourselves, we become more and more self-aware. This is the key to improving decision-making; to make choices that are in alignment with what we want to create in our lives.

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The Courage to Be Present

Ancient wisdom from Buddhism for today's therapists and clients.

How to Practise Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness is important; how do we develop it?

Published by Karen Kissel Wegela, Ph.D.

Cultivating mindfulness is the key to overcoming suffering and recognizing natural wisdom: both our own and others'. How do we go about it?

In the Buddhist tradition and in Contemplative Psychotherapy training, we nurture mindfulness through the practice of sitting meditation. There are many different kinds of meditation. For example, some are designed to help us relax; others are meant to produce altered states of consciousness.

Mindfulness meditation is unique in that it is not directed toward getting us to be different from how we already are. Instead, it helps us become aware of what is already true moment by moment. We could say that it teaches us how to be unconditionally present; that is, it helps us be present with whatever is happening, no matter what it is.

You may wonder what good that is. After all, don't we want to suffer less? Aren't we interested in tuning in to this natural wisdom, this brilliant sanity, that we've heard about? Aren't those changes from how we already are?

Well, yes and no. On the one hand, suffering less and being more aware of our inherent wakefulness would be changes from how we experience ourselves right now, or at least most of the time. On the other hand, though, the way to uncover brilliant sanity and to alleviate suffering is by going more deeply into the present moment and into ourselves as we already are, not by trying to change what is already going on.

The sitting practice of mindfulness meditation gives us exactly this opportunity to become more present with ourselves just as we are. This, in turn, shows us glimpses of our inherent wisdom and teaches us how to stop perpetuating the unnecessary suffering that results from trying to escape the discomfort, and even pain, we inevitably experience as a consequence of simply being alive.

The Buddha taught that the source of suffering is our attempt to escape from our direct experience. First, we cause ourselves suffering by trying to get away from pain and attempting to hang on to pleasure. Unfortunately, instead of quelling our suffering or perpetuating our happiness, this strategy has the opposite effect. Instead of making us happier, it causes us to suffer. Second, we cause suffering when we try to prop up a false identity usually known as ego. This, too, doesn't work and leads instead to suffering.

Mindfulness, paying precise, nonjudgmental attention to the details of our experience as it arises and subsides, doesn't reject anything. Instead of struggling to get away from experiences we find difficult, we practise being able to be with them. Equally, we bring mindfulness to pleasant experiences as well. Perhaps surprisingly, many times we have a hard time staying simply present with happiness. We turn it into something more familiar, like worrying that it won't last or trying to keep it from fading away.

When we are mindful, we show up for our lives; we don't miss them in being distracted or in wishing for things to be different. Instead, if something needs to be changed we are present enough to understand what needs to be done. Being mindful is not a substitute for actually participating in our lives and taking care of our own and others' needs. In fact, the more mindful we are, the more skillful we can be in compassionate action.

How to practise mindfulness meditation

Once again, there are many different basic techniques. If you are interested in pursuing mindfulness within a particular tradition, one of the Buddhist ones or another, you might at some point wish to connect with a meditation instructor or take a class at a meditation center. Still, I can provide one form of basic instructions here so that you can begin.

Basic aspects: body, breath, thought

There are three basic aspects worked with in this meditation technique: body, breath and thoughts.

First, we relate with the body. This includes how we set up the environment..

Setting and posture

Very few people can dedicate a whole room to their meditation practice, so they choose a corner of a room or a spot in their home where they can set up a quiet space.

If you like, you can make a small altar of some kind and decorate it with pictures or photos and sacred objects from your own tradition. You might want to light candles and incense as reminders of impermanence, but you can also have a plain wall in front of you. As long as you are not sitting in front of something distracting, like the TV or the desk where your computer lives, it doesn't matter too much what is in front of you.

Once you've picked your spot, you need to choose your seat. It's fine to sit either on a cushion on the floor or on a chair. If you choose a cushion you can use one designed for meditation practice like a zafu or gomden or you can use a folded up blanket or some other kind of cushion or low bench. The point is to have a seat that is stable and not wiggling around.

If you choose to sit on a chair, pick one that has a flat seat that doesn't tilt too much toward the back. If you are short, like me, you will want to put something on the floor for your feet to rest on, taking a little bit of weight. You don't want your legs dangling uncomfortably. If you are very tall, with long legs, make sure that your hips are higher than your knees-either on a chair or on a cushion. If you don't do that your back will start to hurt pretty quickly.

Even though we can practise mindfulness in any place and in any posture, some conditions are more conducive. So first we find a relatively quiet place where we are unlikely to be disturbed. We then adopt a relaxed but alert posture. The traditional position is sitting cross legged on a cushion on the floor, but sitting on a chair with the back straight and unsupported and relaxed will do just as well.

Eyes opened or closed?

When beginning practice it is better to close the eyes. Ultimately it is very useful to be able to practise mindfulness with the eyes open as it allows us to expand its application to a much broader range of settings.

Okay, once you have your seat and your spot, go ahead and sit down. Take a posture that is upright but not rigid. The idea is to take a posture that reflects your inherent brilliant sanity, so one that is dignified but not stiff. The back is straight with the curve in the lower back that is naturally there. I was once told to imagine that my spine was a tree and to lean against it. It works for me; you can see if it works for you.

Sitting on a cushion, cross your legs comfortably in front of you. There's no need to contort yourself into an uncomfortable posture. Just simply cross your legs as you might have done as a child. Notice again that you want your hips higher than your knees. If necessary, add more height to your seat by folding up a blanket or towel.

Hands rest on the thighs, facing down. The eyes are somewhat open and the gaze rests gently on the floor in front of you about four to six feet away. If you are closer to the wall than that, let your gaze rest on the wall wherever it lands as if you were looking that distance in front. The gaze is not tightly focused. The idea is that whatever is in front of you is what's in front of you. Don't stare or do anything special with your gaze; just let it rest where you've set it.

Let your front be open and your back be strong.

Begin by just sitting in this posture for a few minutes in this environment. If your attention wanders away, just gently bring it back to your body and the environment. The key word here is "gently." Your mind will wander. That's part of what you will notice with your mindfulness: minds wander. When you notice that yours has wandered, come back again to body and environment.

The second part of the practice is working with the breath.

In this practice rest your attention lightly (yes, lightly) on the breath.

We then use the breath as an anchor for our attention. A repeated phrase called a mantra can be used for the same purpose. However, the breath has the advantages of immediately bringing the attention into the body. Moreover, awareness of the breath immediately focuses our attention on a function that is under both conscious and unconscious control. This is a very appropriate place for psychological work to occur. So we focus our attention on the breath without trying to control it. We let the breath breathe itself.

Feel it as it comes into your body and as it goes out. There's no special way to breathe in this technique. Once again, we are interested in how we already are, not how we are if we manipulate our breath. If you find that you are, in fact, controlling your breath in some way, just let it be that way. It's a bit tricky to try to be natural on purpose, so don't get caught up in worrying about whether your breath is natural or not. Just let it be however it is.

Again, sit for a few minutes with the posture and the environment and with your breath. In and out. In and out. Sometimes this is quantified as 25% of your attention on your breath. The idea isn't to get it "right," but instead to give you an idea that you're not channeling all of your attention tightly on to your breath. The rest of your attention will naturally be on your body and the environment.

Soon enough we will realize we have become distracted from our breath and immersed in our thought stream as is our well established habit. When this happens we gently bring attention back to the breath without criticism or struggle. We have just been for a dip in our thought stream. So we lightly return to the solid ground of our awareness of our breath. It is this gentle process of moving in and out of the mind-stream that creates the de-centering effect described by Segal et al (2002).

Similarly, sensations such as sounds, aches itches and tingles are quite acceptable. We can just allow them to be. When these sensations lead to discursive thoughts, such as: "I wish that dog next door would stop barking", then we treat that like any other thought. So we just gently return our attention to our breath. .Strong emotions can sometimes be problematic. They can lead to the practitioner being overwhelmed by a vortex of intense thoughts and feelings. In this case it is often helpful to be mindful of the changing physical sensations in the body associated with the emotion. As the practitioner watches the fluctuations and changing nature of these sensations, the sense of being overwhelmed can often be replaced with interest or even curiosity about the experience.

We use the breath as an anchor as a way of developing our ability to witness the activity of the mind.

As we get used to this the mind settles. It is then easier to expand our mindfulness to include:

- Subtle body sensations - We can scan our body from head to toe or feel our breath expand into different parts of the body.
- Sights, sounds, smells & any other sensory impressions
- Emotions
- Thoughts in different modalities e.g. verbal, visual, musical
- Thought types e.g. planning, sexual, grandiose fantasies, worrying
- The quality of our mindfulness: calm and clear, or agitated, or foggy, or sleepy

Finally, the last part of the practice is working with thoughts.

As you sit practicing, you will notice that thoughts arise. Sometimes there are a great many thoughts, overlapping one over the next: memories, plans for the future, fantasies, snatches of jingles from TV commercials. There may seem to be no gaps at all in which you can catch a glimpse of your breath. That's not uncommon, especially if you're new to meditation. Just notice what happens.

All thoughts including images are regarded as equal while meditating. It does not matter how noble or base they might be; how profound or banal they might be. This is how we cultivate the nonjudgmental awareness that is the cornerstone of mindfulness. So for the purpose of mindfulness they are all "just thoughts".

When you notice that you have gotten so caught up in thoughts that you have forgotten that you're sitting in the room, just gently bring yourself back to the breath. You can mentally say "thinking" to yourself as a further reminder of what just happened. This labeling is not a judgment; it is a neutral observation: "Thinking has just occurred." I like to think of it as a kind of weather report: "Thinking has just been observed in the vicinity."

Timing

How long should you practise? If you are new to it, try to sit for 10 to 15 minutes and gradually increase to 20 or 30 minutes. Eventually, you could extend it to 45 minutes or an hour. If you want to sit longer, you might want to learn how to do walking meditation as a break..

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, remember that mindfulness meditation is about practicing being mindful of whatever happens. It is NOT about getting ourselves to stop thinking. Repeat: it is not about getting ourselves to stop thinking. It is easy to fall into believing that that is the goal. Many people have a mistaken idea that becoming blank is the goal of meditation. Perhaps it is in some approaches, but it's not in mindfulness meditation. So once again: if you find you are thinking (and you will), include it in what you notice. Don't try to get rid of your thoughts. It won't work and it's the opposite of the spirit of the practice. We are trying to be with ourselves as we already are, not trying to change ourselves into some preconceived notion of how we ought to be instead.

Many people have great difficulty establishing a regular daily practice. Usually it is best if a practitioner links the mindfulness practice into their normal daily routine. Most people have a predictable morning routine into which mindfulness can be slotted. The important thing is that the practice should not be based on whether a practitioner feels up to it on a particular day or not. Instead it needs to be established as a good habit, which is practiced without internal disputation, much like brushing your teeth.

Sometimes flexibility and imagination are required to find an appropriate time and place. People with young children often find it easier to meditate at work in their office. Single parents of preschool children often find it very difficult to find time. Sometimes they can fit it in when the children are napping. Some people meditate on the train on the way to work in the morning.

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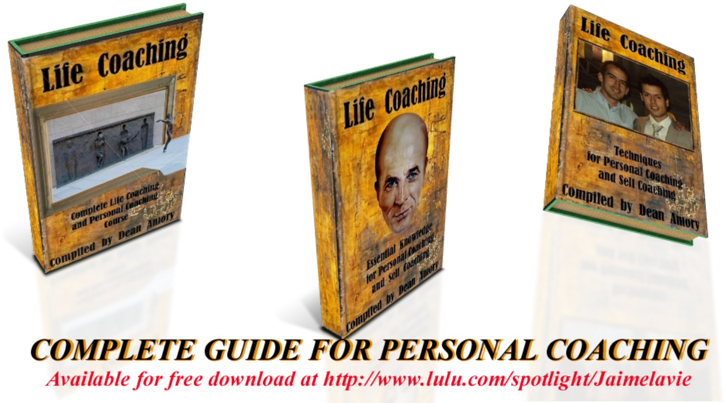
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Mindfulness Meditation Therapy (MMT):

Outline By Peter Strong, PhD

Mindfulness Meditation therapy (MMT) can be defined as: the direct application of mindfulness to the present felt-sense of an emotional complex.

Direct Application of Mindfulness

“Direct Application” means that the individual trains to establish and sustain a quality of relationship with the inner experience of an emotion, called the Mindfulness Based Relationship. The quality of the MBR is the key factor that will determine the successful outcome of MMT.

Mindfulness describes direct attention and awareness that is best described by the term engaged presence. When we are mindful, we are fully awake and aware of what is happening as it is happening, without any thinking about the experience or any emotional reaction to the experience. We simply "sit" with the experience and observe it with a keen interest as we might have when listening to a favorite piece of classical music. But mindfulness also has a quality of engagement in which we investigate the structure of the experience. All mindfulness involves moving beyond the superficial and initial appearance of experience and uncovering the finer and more subtle inner structure of experience. When we listen to an orchestra with this sense of rapture and keen interest, we are likely to become aware of individual instruments and gain a new appreciation of the piece of music that exceeds our previous experience. When this kind of mindfulness is developed, then every time we listen to the music we always discover it anew, even though we have heard it a thousand times. This is the kind of attitude and approach to experience that we are attempting to cultivate in our practice of The Path of Mindfulness and MMT.

Present Felt Sense

The term "Present Felt Sense" of an emotional complex is the general quality of feeling that surrounds the emotion. An emotion is different than a feeling, because it has form. An emotion is a constellation of thinking, physical sensations, actions and speech. If you think of anger as an example, to be angry requires changes in facial expression, tightening in various muscle groups throughout the body, an increase in heart rate and changes in behavior. These actions are aggregated around a collage of different feelings, beliefs and patterns of thinking. All of these components are part of the emotional reaction we call anger.

A feeling does not have form, but is a property in the same way that the color yellow is a property of a lemon. An emotion has a certain felt sense, a certain quality of feeling energy, called vedana. In Buddhist terms, this general undifferentiated feeling energy can be positive, negative or neutral. The negative form is called dukkhavedana and is the feeling sense that accompanies dukkha or emotional suffering and agitation.

What the Buddha discovered over 2500 years ago, is that this very process of listening with mindfulness and opening to the unfolding orchestra of our own experience, including the experience of emotional suffering, or dukkha, creates the right conditions for transformation. All emotional suffering is comprised of psychological feeling energy, vedana that has become locked into specific mental formations, sankharas that take the form of an emotional reaction, a behavioral reaction or even a bodily reaction.

Dukkha

Dukkha is a state of psychological instability and the psyche will always move in a direction that leads to the resolution of this instability, if given the freedom to change. This automatic tendency towards resolution, I call Psychological Homeostasis and which corresponds to the same principle of physiological, biochemical and immunological homeostasis that occurs spontaneously in the body. However, the absolutely essential factor required for homeostasis to work in either the body or the mind is FREEDOM: the freedom to move and change in an intelligent direction that leads towards the resolution of instability and the cessation of dukkha. Mindfulness is the perfection of relationship to our experience that brings this essential quality of freedom to dukkha and creates the ideal conditions in which emotional conflict can transform and resolve itself. A therapeutic space opens around the dukkha and the dukkha responds by changing, transforming in a direction that leads towards resolution. We can feel this process transformation as it is occurring by monitoring changes in feeling tone. When transformation leads to resolution there is a felt shift from dukkhavedana to sukhavedana, the more positive form of feeling energy. Eventually, when resolution is complete, the feeling energy changes further to a state of greater stability in which the felt sense is neutral, balanced and in equilibrium and this is called upekkhavedana. This latter quality of feeling is accompanied by a sense of well-being and vitality as energy is released back into the psyche.

Transformation and resolution

The mechanism of transformation and resolution

The mechanism of transformation and resolution is primarily experiential, which means that changes evolve from the immediate present experience of the emotion, rather than from our views and beliefs about the experience. Of course, mindfulness, or sati is all about being present for our experience as it arises and unfolds in the present moment. The path of experiential transformation and resolution is unique to each person and each session of MMT. Typically, there will be a differentiation of feelings, memories and word-symbols that seem to fit with the feelings that are experienced. Almost all clients will notice some form of experiential imagery that seems to resonate with the felt sense of the experience. The mind thinks in pictures and uses visual representations to organize experience. Many of us are not aware of this internal imagery, but when we focus mindfulness on the felt sense of an emotion we create the right state of awareness and sensitivity in which imagery will arise. Experiential imagery is imagery that arises from our present felt experience, rather than a visualization that we create and it provides an extraordinarily powerful medium for promoting the transformation and resolution of dukkha.

The process of MMT

1. Recognition

The first phase of Mindfulness Meditation Therapy is primarily about learning to recognize reactions as and when they arise and replace ignorance with awareness. This is the first function of mindfulness, the factor of RECOGNITION. Without this most basic first step nothing can change, but with awareness comes the possibility of change. Recognition is the beginning of the transformational process and often this skill alone is sufficient to totally change the whole reactive dynamic between two people.

2. Reframing

The next phase of MMT involves changing how we view the reaction and associated emotional energy. This is called "reframing" and is one of a number of skills that is taught in the psychological science of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and which is another chief modality used in MMT. Normally, (ie when we are unaware) we blindly identify with emotional reactions and literally become the reaction. When a reaction of feeling hurt arises we become the emotional reaction of hurting. Anger arises and we become angry. We say "I am upset," or "I am angry?" because we literally take on the entire identity of the emotion. During reframing, we learn to stop this automatic process of subjective identification and see the reaction as simply an object that is not self, but simply a phenomenon that has arisen in our consciousness due to various causes and conditions.

When the reaction of feeling upset arises, we now see it as an object within us, rather like a bubble rising in a pond. The bubble is not the pond, but simply an object that arises within the pond and the emotion is not our self, but simply a small part that arises within our experience. After reframing the emotion, we learn to say, "I notice a feeling of hurting within me" or "I notice anger arising in my mind." This is a very important step, because it counteracts the habitual tendency to react and opens up a sense of space and choices around the emotion. You cannot relate to something with any sense of presence and engagement if you are gripped by reactivity: reactivity inhibits relationship. Only when you can form a pure and direct relationship with an experience, including emotional suffering, will presence and engagement be possible and without complete presence, nothing can change.

3. Relationship

The third phase of MMT, after Recognition and Reframing is the most important step of forming a Relationship with the internal felt-sense of the emotional reaction. Let us explore this in more detail. Once you have recognized a reaction and made it into an object that you can see and experience, then you begin to see the emotional reaction as an object to be investigated and known in its own right, rather than getting entangled in the storyline of the emotion, which is our usual tendency. The storyline may be very compelling and you may feel very offended or hurt, but indulging in negative, emotionally charged thinking is seldom an effective tool for resolving emotional conflict, internally or externally. This is the first function of mindfulness: learning to recognize a reaction, seeing it as an object and not getting seduced into further reactivity.

The Mindfulness Based Relationship

The kind of relationship that we cultivate in MMT is called the Mindfulness Based Relationship. This relationship has certain unique qualities.

The first and most important quality is non-reactivity.

By learning to recognize reactivity, we can stop the tendency to proliferate further reactivity in the form of reactive thinking, or further emotional reactions of aversion and displeasure.

The second quality is caring.

The second characteristic of the mindfulness-based relationship is about opening our heart and mind and developing a quality of genuine caring towards the inner pain of our anger or resentment. Instead of turning away, we turn towards our suffering or the suffering of others. This does not mean that we indulge in feeling sorry for ourselves and certainly it does not mean that we indulge in reactive thinking, such as worrying. Rather, we learn to be fully present with our inner felt experience of an emotion with a keen level of attention.

The third quality is investigation.

We turn towards our pain, we become attentive and then we take this further step and investigate the deeper inner structure of the experience. This has a profound effect on whatever is observed and the observed responds by differentiating into its component parts. What seemed like the solid emotion of anger or resentment, fear or anxiety begins to unfold into a complex interior landscape of subtle feelings and memories and very often, some form of experiential imagery.

4. Experiential Transformation

This is the fourth phase of MMT. The term "experiential" is a very important term in mindfulness work and MMT and has a very specific meaning. By "experiential" we mean that we allow experience to unfold in its own way and in its own time without any interference or agenda or beliefs about what should happen. Mindfulness provides the ideal therapeutic space in which experiential unfolding can occur, because of its open and non-judgmental quality.

What unfolds is often unexpected and unpredictable, but has a very clear felt meaning and felt sense of being relevant and important. The exact nature of what unfolds is unique to each person and cannot be predicted. There is no attempt made to interpret what arises, only to fully experience it with mindfulness and full presence of mind. The effect of becoming aware of this inner detailed structure that arises naturally as we focus mindfully on an emotion is highly transformational. Often, beneath anger there is sadness and beneath resentment there is fear. These more subtle feelings may give rise to further feelings and experience.

During the process of transformation, emotions literally dissolve into many small parts, which can be more readily digested and re-integrated by the psyche and our innate intelligence into something more stable.

Besides the differentiation of feelings and associated memories, people will frequently encounter some form of experiential imagery. It may be in the form of a memory image, a picture from the past. Experiential imagery often takes on a more abstract form of shifting colors and shapes. Whatever form the imagery takes, the approach is always to sit with the present experience and felt sense associated with the imagery and allow it to unfold and change in its own unique way. One person focusing on anger first notices a red color, which takes on the form of a hard, rough rock. With continued mindfulness, the rock begins to change shape and color and dissolves into a pile of white sand. This is not visualization, because there was no deliberate effort to create the imagery; they arose experientially.

The process of unfolding and transformation of experiential imagery is one of the most powerful events that can occur during MMT and is one of the most effective means of producing change at the deepest level of our emotional suffering. How this works is not well understood, but it is generally agreed that the mind thinks in pictures and organizes memory and particularly the affective dimension of memory through visual imagery. Why the anger took on the form of a red colored rock is interesting and of course red is often associated with anger, as is hardness. Why it changed into white sand is also interesting and similarly we can make interpretations of what it means: white sand symbolizes tranquility and fluidity. However, interpretation is not the purpose of MMT; what is important is the full conscious experience of this process of change in the inner structure of our experience. It is this conscious awareness of the process that is transformational, not an understanding of the contents that arise.

5. Resolution

The final step of MMT is RESOLUTION. Resolution is said to have occurred when the emotional energy that powers a pattern of emotional reactivity has dissipated and returned to the psyche, providing energy for new and more positive responses.

Resolution is the state of equilibrium, accompanied by a felt sense of uppekhavedana, which although neutral can lead to very euphoric feelings that can be simply described as the taste of freedom.

Any form of emotional suffering, or dukkha, as it is called in Buddhism, represents a state of instability and conflict in the psyche. The psyche hates instability and will always try to resolve dukkha if given the freedom to change. Mindfulness provides the therapeutic space and freedom in which transformation and resolution can occur.

The guiding principle throughout MMT and the process of transformation and eventual resolution of emotional pain is called satipanna, which means the wisdom-intelligence that arises with mindfulness. This is our innate intelligence that we all possess and which is unique to each moment of experience. Just as water seems to have an innate intelligence in its relentless journey to be united with the ocean, so the psyche has an innate intelligence that will always move towards the resolution of dukkha in all its forms.

Mindfulness provides the conditions of freedom and openness in which satipanna will naturally direct and guide all the subtle changes at the experiential level that lead to the resolution of dukkha. This is also described in Buddhism as the awakening or living real-time insight into the Four Noble Truths: Awakening to dukkha, the cause of dukkha, the state of non-dukkha and The Path of Mindfulness that leads to the resolution of dukkha.

We start with recognizing dukkha, we form a relationship with the dukkha with mindfulness and we allow the dukkha to unfold, change and transform itself in the direction that leads to its cessation. This direction is literally encoded in the internal structure of the state of instability of dukkha in just the same way that the path that water will take is encoded in the very process of creating instability when we pour water on the top of a hill. The direction of change is always towards greater and ultimately final and absolute stability. This applies to dukkha just as much as to the water trapped on top of a hill. Given time and the freedom to change, that water will return to the ocean and the psyche will resolve dukkha and reach a place of stability.

About Peter Strong

Peter Strong PhD is a Mindfulness Psychotherapist, teacher and author who specializes in the study of mindfulness and its application in Mindfulness Meditation Therapy. He has a private psychotherapy practice in Boulder, Colorado for individuals and couples and also provides an Online Counseling Service via Skype for the effective resolution of anxiety, depression, phobias, grief, trauma and other forms of emotional stress.

Besides therapy sessions in his Boulder Office, Dr Strong provides an Online Counseling Service via Skype for anxiety (Online Anxiety Therapy), depression (Online Depression Therapy) and mindfulness-based therapy for stress and PTSD (Online Stress Management).

Email inquiries about Online Therapy and Online Counseling are most welcome. Request an Online Psychotherapy Skype session today and begin a course of Mindfulness Therapy for your Anxiety, Depression or Emotional Stress.

You can purchase a copy of Dr Strong's book 'The Path of Mindfulness Meditation' at Amazon.com, and Barnes&Noble.com. A Kindle edition is also available.

Sources :

http://www.counselingtherapyonline.com
http://www.mindfulnessmeditationtherapy.com

Mindfulness in the workplace

How practising mindfulness in the workplace can boost productivity

Mindfulness offers a host of benefits to employers and employees alike, reports mindfulness expert and coach Liz Hall.

Not that long ago, meditation was seen widely as the preserve of hippies and saffron-clad monks, unsuited for the business world. Nowadays, a growing number of businesses are recognising what mindfulness has to offer, including Transport for London (TfL), Google, GlaxoSmithKline, the Home Office, the Cabinet Office, KPMG, and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Interest in applying mindfulness within the workplace is rising rapidly. Mindfulness has roots in the Buddhist belief system, although there is a tradition of contemplation within most religions and belief systems, including Christianity.

However, what we are now seeing is a widespread secularisation of the approach, thanks to the work of people such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Centre for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts medical school.

Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program has been widely adapted and implemented worldwide, along with a variation referred to as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) that was developed at the Oxford Mindfulness Centre.

The National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence's recommendation of MBCT as the go-to therapy for recurrent depression has also contributed to mindfulness extending beyond the spiritual arena.

Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as "paying attention in the present moment, non-judgmentally".

Mindfulness is a way to train the mind, but also includes paying attention to the body and the world around us. It helps us recognise that we are not a slave to our thoughts and that we can choose how we respond, two strands highlighted by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF).

Interest in mindfulness is also growing because people are seeking ways to cope with the challenges, complexities and ambiguity of our times.

Many are not coping - mental health problems are on the rise, with stress topping the league of reasons for long-term sickness absence, according to research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2011). People are turning to mindfulness as an antidote to all the doing, thinking and struggling, and discovering it offers much more besides.

Benefits include improvements to physical and mental health, with an increased ability to be resilient and manage stress. For employers, this translates into higher productivity and reduced sickness absence levels, among other things.

TfL, for example, has seen the number of days taken off because of stress, anxiety and depression fall by 71% since introducing employees to mindfulness. Other benefits include heightened emotional intelligence, improved decision-making and strategic-thinking abilities, a heightened ability to focus and enhanced creativity.

Some remain sceptical and believe that mindfulness is just the latest fad, while others are unaware of the benefits or fear being labelled as unprofessional.

As a business journalist and coach, I, too, feared the latter and remained a "closet meditator" for years. However, I soon discovered that many of my clients found mindfulness very helpful. I lay to rest any residual concerns about mixing mindfulness with business after researching my book Mindful Coaching.

My research included a literature review of more than 70 research papers and 80 books, as well as interviews with employers, academics, coaches, trainers, leaders, and mindfulness and neuroscience experts. I also carried out a survey of 156 coaches - the Mindfulness in coaching 2012 survey.

There is plenty of evidence, including from the mental health arena and the field of neuroscience, showing how mindfulness can help reduce stress.

Developing these skills help people become more engaged in their work, more energised and less anxious, and they suffer from fewer symptoms of stress, according to the MHF.

A study of HR managers by the University of Washington says that mindfulness helps us experience less stress and increase focus when multitasking.

Making it work

Mindfulness can be introduced into the workplace in a number of ways, including:

- offering it within leadership and management development either explicitly as mindfulness or as modules on emotional intelligence, self-management, resilience, wellbeing and strategic thinking;
- incorporating it into other learning and development programs;
- putting it into corporate social responsibility initiatives;
- offering mindfulness-based stress management programs; and
- using it to underpin coaching practice and weaving it into coaching interventions.

Of the coaches responding to the Mindfulness in coaching 2012 survey: 83% reported that they use mindfulness with their clients; 74% shared mindfulness practices with clients to carry out at home; 67% used it themselves in the session; and 64% invited clients to do mindfulness practices with coaching sessions.

Some 76% had no concerns about using mindfulness with clients. They use mindfulness to help clients: become more self-aware (70%); be calmer or less anxious (59%); manage stress (55%); be more centred (55%); manage reactions or responses (51%); gain clarity (47%); improve their wellbeing (45%); be more emotionally intelligent (39%); and see the bigger picture (36%), among other reasons.

Practising mindfulness helps coaches personally to: live more in the moment (74%); become more self-aware (73%); manage or prevent stress (67%); and be more available to their clients (65%).

Getting employees engaged

There is often resistance to mindfulness from individuals because it can be associated with "doing nothing". As Langer says, we often see inaction as a lack of a certain action rather than reframing our inaction as a choice to go down another route - one of relaxing, refreshing, renewing, reflecting, or even actively "doing nothing".

Top tips for a mindful workplace

- Sell the benefits and potential impact on the bottom line.
- Highlight the research backing up mindfulness.
- Know your audience and don't feel obliged to call it mindfulness - for example, you may wish to talk about awareness or presence instead.
- Keep it secular.
- Be realistic about how much time people will be able to or want to set aside for practice.
- Encourage little-and-often practice.
- Set aside a room where employees can meditate or go to take time out undisturbed.
- Offer regular mindfulness training programs (whatever you call them).
- Include mindfulness within management and leadership development programs either explicitly or, for example, within a module on emotional intelligence or resilience.

Sometimes people fear becoming disengaged and not enjoying life to the full. But mindfulness is about living life joyfully and more completely. It helps us "just be" and develop a new way of being, but it also helps us "do" more productively.

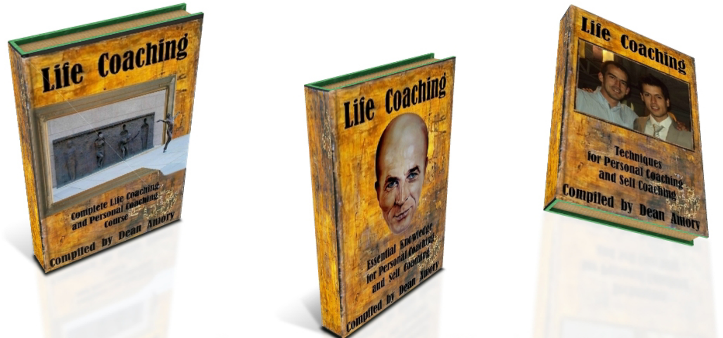
Often, it is the label that is the problem. It can help to talk instead about stress management, self-awareness, managing emotions or emotional intelligence.

When Google first ran mindfulness training as an MBSR offer, it did not manage to attract many participants because stress was seen as a badge of honour. However, when it re-branded its Search Inside Yourself program as a way to develop emotional intelligence, the number of participants suddenly grew. Many of its engineers were already aware of their deficits in this area.

There will be different themes that appeal or have relevance depending on the group targeted. If people are going to be bothered to practise, the relevance must be flagged up - and practice is where it is at.

About the author:

Liz Hall is editor of Coaching at Work, a trained coach, a mindfulness trainer and workshop facilitator and author of Mindful Coaching.



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Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

Unlike cognitive therapy, the mindfulness approach makes no attempt to change the content of negative thinking.

MBCT encourages participants to change their relationship to their own thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, so that they have an opportunity to discover that these are fleeting events in the mind and the body which they can choose to engage with – or not.

Repeated practice in noticing and observing with interest and compassion helps participants to realize that their thoughts, emotions and sensations are just thoughts, emotions, and sensations, rather than 'truth' or 'me.'

The participant learns to see more clearly the patterns of the mind, and to recognize when his/her mood is beginning to dip without adding to the problem by falling into analysis and rumination.

MBCT helps break the old association between negative mood and the negative thinking it would normally trigger.

Participants develop the capacity to allow distressing emotions, thoughts, and sensations to come and go, without feeling that they have to suppress them, run away from them, or do battle with them. The goal is that they learn to stay in touch with the present moment, without being driven to dwell on the past or worry about the future.

What is MBCT?

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy was derived from the original program created by Jon Kabat - Zinn , which is known as Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This form of therapy has been shown to be extremely effective at liberating and empowering clients with various medical ailments, including hypertension, chronic pain, and cancer. In addition, this method works equally as well to relieve the symptoms of various psychological issues including anxiety and panic. The original platform was designed to address the needs of people who suffered from multiple events of depression. Fellow developers include Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams , John D. Teasdale, Bruno Cayoun.

Method and process of MBCT

The technique is applied through an eight week regimen of therapy courses, as well as at home audio cues that teach clients the art of mindfulness meditation. Clients gain an ability to realign themselves away from their thoughts and feelings and focus instead on the occurring changes in their body and mind through yoga, meditation and breathing.

While undergoing this form of therapy, a client is instructed to recognize their sense of being and to see themselves as separate from their thoughts and moods. This disconnect allows a client to become liberated from obsessive thought patterns that often replay the same negative messages over and over. Rather than being forced to live the mood, the client gains an awareness of the separation and begins to understand that they are in the present moment and the mood is actively existing, albeit at the same time, but not in the same dimension. This insight affords the client the opportunity to heal themselves by interjecting positive thoughts and responses to the moods in order to disarm them.

Long-term skills from MBCT

Participants are armed with knowledge regarding depression as an illness, and are given additional tools to combat their depressive symptoms as they arise. This form of therapy is often used in conjunction with other therapies and treatments in order to facilitate a complete and rapid progression to healing. Clients who use this technique will often be able to revert to these methods in times of distress or when they are faced with situations that cause them to lose their sense of separation from their thoughts.

Mindful way through depression

Source:
http://www.beatingthebeast.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=24868

'Beating The Beast" is an Online Depression Support Community

What follows is “Darkages’ ‘ initial contribution made to the blog's topic "Mindfulness and MBCT - a summary", which was started by "Darkages" on February 3, 2009.

The following are the rough notes "Darkages" took while reading through "the Mindful Way Through Depression", by Teasdale, Zinn, and others.

The book describes Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, which is a successful blend between mindfulness (aka Buddhist meditation without the Buddhism bit) and CBT or Cognitive Behavioural therapy. I say successful as two studies indicate that in people with recurrent depression (3 episodes or mode), MBCT about halves the probability of further relapse, e.g. from 70% to 35%.

Little disclaimer by “Darkages”: this is all copyright Teasdale et al.

The rumination spiral to depression:

- It is not the mood that does the damage but how we react to it (negative reaction starts the spiral: anxious about down mood, down about stress; frustrated with failure to think our way out of suffering, lost in memories or worries, etc.).

- Habitual ways to extricate ourselves from the downward spiral actually fuels the pain we're trying to escape: trying to THINK our way out of our moods, self-criticism: "what's wrong with me? I should be feeling happy!"... The very act of focusing on this "gap" takes us further away from how we want to BE...

The alternative to rumination: Mindfulness.

- Thoughts are ideas (creations of the mind) that come and go like clouds, they are NOT facts or "me"-let them float by.

- Be here and now; STOP dwelling on the past or worrying about the future

- Refrain from trying to fight against or flee from emotions (paper tigers) we don't want to be feeling - WANTING things to be different. Those who put more effort into keeping negative thinking out of the mind end up being more depressed than those who do not ("it's ok, let if be").

Instead, focus attention on a single (neutral) object - the breath. Every time the mind wanders, briefly note what is going on (e.g. "worrying, worrying"), smile to yourself and go back to the practice. There is no "bad" meditation, every mind wandering IS an opportunity to practise!

Stop trying to force pleasant feelings, they are freer to emerge on their own; stop trying to resist unpleasant feelings, they can drift away by themselves.

Reacting to own unhappiness as if to a threat, triggers the brain's avoidance system. A fleeting "unpleasant" memory fuels a chain reaction. The practice is to catch the unpleasantness BEFORE it triggers aversion, which is also registered as unpleasant, and so on... Fight/flight arises whether trying to escape from a tiger or from own feelings (symbolic threat), it narrows our focus.

Challenge of each moment of the practice is to hold it longer than feels comfortable. Welcome unpleasant sensations or feelings - ask "what is this?" to keep the mind from leaping in with "I hate this-I can't do this" (Stef: you don't have to like it, just do it"). Use the body and the breath during the day to ground us in awareness, e.g. become mindful of posture or any movement (doesn't take more time than usual, we're doing it anyway). Notice that THINKING about discomfort or how long it will last creates suffering...

Breathing WITH: pay attention to music AND in the background on the breath. This practice trains us to steady the mind through difficult situations.

Awareness of feelings: locate part of the body (e.g. abdomen) that reacts to stress. Tune in to it regularly, every day. Then, just be with the sensations, or, move into a breathing space...

Challenge: can we be with our unwanted emotions without making them worse? Alternative: suffer & struggle versus recognize & accept those

emotions ("the enemy") so they do not trigger a downward spiral - may run counter to self-preservation instincts. Not easy, but do-able.

Once we notice an unpleasant feeling, focus as best we can on how we experience it IN THE BODY (versus endlessly thinking about it) .

- "breathing with". We use the skills we develop in working with physical discomfort or pain, applying them to emotional discomfort. Keep in mind: Mindfulness is not about getting rid of anything but provides a way to be with IT without struggle, in each moment, as if with a sick (inner) child that needs to be held & reassured. The will still be pain, but more bearable and with less intense suffering.

Thoughts: let them float buy or each time label them as "thinking" or give them a name (e.g. "anxious mind", "inner critic"), and go back to the practice (non-attachment helps intentionally disengaging from being carried away by the automatic negative thought stream, "what's wrong with me" etc.). Mindfulness of hearing & thinking (like images projected on a screen at the movies).

Jade: "simply staying with [thoughts] might be less frightening and healthier than (spiralling off into) analyzing it".

Awareness of emotions by simply sitting- or breathing with meditation.

Namaste
Reluna

Everyday-life practice & coping:

The 3mn breathing spaces as "breaks":

1) dignified posture, become aware of thoughts, feelings & body sensations,

2) follow the breath,

3) expand awareness to body as a whole.

Discomfort? Say to yourself on out breath: "it's ok, whatever it is, it's already here... I do not NEED to be happy" (analogy: stop clinging to hope that raining will stop and enter the downpour... Let go and accept/welcome wetness...).

Meditation pitfalls:

Trying to fix things by setting goals, THINKING about the decision whether to practise or not and making "should/shoulds" instead of simply practicing the 3mn.

The critical point: when we feel hassled IS the perfect moment for the 3mn-new attitudes (conscious response of turning towards difficulties instead of fight/flight reaction to moods & inner critic) and persistent practise to counterbalance old habits. Take each "there's no point, I missed too much; give up" or feelings of threat as a REMINDER - a MESSENGER- to practise - don't think about it! Choose: ruminative brooding for 3mn or 3mn practice?

When depressed e.g. at wake-up besides the breathing space also ask: "how can I best be kind to myself, look after myself, right now? What would I do at this moment if a loved one was feeling this way (and look after myself the same way)?"

Mindfulness throughout the day:

1) do one thing at a time;
2) pay full attention to the doing (sidestep analytic thinking);
3) when the mind wanders, bring it back to the "practice" (life);
4) repeat that step 10000 times;
5) investigate the distractions (wandering).

Being mindful in everyday life means to be pure consciousness in everything you do. You'll have to be in the world but not of the world. Be engaged in form and content, but not let yourself be affected by form and content. You will appear to participate, but you will be of a whole different level. This is the true purpose of mindfulness meditation.

Practicing mindfulness meditation in everyday life is the next step in practicing Mindfulness. Once you can make the shift from unconsciousness to consciousness, from illusion to truthfulness, from distraction to awareness, you will find it much easier to apply this state of awareness to everything you do and to everything that happens to you in the external world. Situations will no longer activate your personal garbage of thoughts, emotions and other impressions and yet you are there, present; fully conscious as you reside in your centre of consciousness.

Try this by witnessing everything that happens around you and within you while you live your everyday life. What do these situations in the external world activate in your mind/body system? What do you feel, what do you think about it, etc. Don't get too involved in answering those questions; just remain the witness to everything. Don't think about things, don't judge what you witness, just be. Practise retaining this state of beingness as often and for as long as you can while doing whatever it is you are doing. Always be aware of your inner self and the mind's process by a technique very similar and complementary in nature to the mindfulness meditation: Witnessing the mind.

Mindfulness meditation

Mindfulness meditation is one of the most direct meditations for transcending the mind. It involves becoming aware of the present moment and the thoughts that arise in the mind-field. By doing so, you will establish a natural non-attachment to your thoughts and thinking process. This happens because you start to become the witness of your mind, instead of being involved in it. The unconscious identification with the mind will dissolve more and more when you deepen your witnessing.

There are basically two primary forms of meditating. One of them consists of training and focussing the mind, while the other form consists mostly of mindfulness meditation, plus the no-mind meditation, which is basically the result of advanced mindfulness meditation. When you get the hang of mindfulness, you will gradually become mindless, meaning that all thought activities cease as you become fully aware of consciousness itself.

Practising mindfulness:

Mindfulness is not a meditation in which you focus on some thing or idea in specific, on the contrary; you try to become fully alert, fully conscious as you are, without any modifications of the mind disturbing your beingness in the now. You shift your awareness to the state of being a witness to everything that is, including your mind's content when it arises. It can be practised in a meditative setting/atmosphere but the deepest purpose of this meditation is to make you capable of residing in full and awake consciousness at all times and in every thinkable situation.

When practicing mindfulness meditation as an exercise you can just go and sit somewhere you are comfortable with and become focussed. Don't become focussed on anything in specific; just become focussed, centred in consciousness, aware, as if you are focussing on being focussed. As if focus itself is the 'object' of your awareness/meditation. This is tricky to understand as you need some experience with it to know of that 'place' or 'zone' that I am talking about, but once you truly know it, you can go back there rather immediately.

The major difference between the form of concentration meditation and the mindfulness form of meditating is that in concentration you focus on content, while in mindfulness it is not about the content of your focus, but about the quality or level of your focus, or awareness itself. Mindfulness meditation is a way to raise your level of awareness, of consciousness immediately, without having to deal with and become involved in the infinite possibilities of content.

While practicing this beingness, this awareness, thoughts will arise. All you need to do with these thoughts is nothing. Don't do anything with them, don't try to watch them, don't try to manipulate them, don't judge them, just don't try anything. Let them be and remain the witness to all that happens. Open up your focus but remain alert. If you notice you are getting involved with thought-forms, go back to the focussed state of alertness, of witnessing and retain this state of focussed awareness as thoughts pass by in the mind. The longer you retain this state, the greater the decrease in thought-forms will become and the greater the clarity and bliss.

Note that the goal is not to notice or become aware of everything that is going on in the environment. This will happen in later stages automatically and it is not even the purpose of this meditation; it is just a possible result of mindfulness meditation. For now, don't try to focus on things that happen, only retain high quality awareness when things do happen to catch your eye or any of the other senses. Don't focus on them, just remain focussed, conscious and let distractions be and pass on their own account.

Two primary stages in this practice will be experienced:

1: Conscious beingness aimed outward: In the beginning stage of practicing this, you will raise your consciousness and become the witness of your thoughts and all else that is going on.

2: Conscious beingness resides in itself: In the latter stage you will not only be conscious and witness your mind, but you will become aware of yourself as pure consciousness. Now consciousness has no direction of focus in specific, it is just pure consciousness, pure beingness.

7 Strategies for Living a Conscious Life

Would you like to get more out of your life? It's never too late to make a new choice or reverse your life's course. One way to live a more enriched life is to be conscious of what you're doing at every moment. This way, you stay connected with your behaviour and feelings.

Here's an example situation: You've decided to stop eating potato chips and chocolate. You make a pledge to yourself to watch what you eat. But two hours later, you suddenly realize you're sitting in front of the television, bag of potato chips in hand.

Now imagine the same scenario, yet this time you behave differently. You spend some time thinking about how to ensure you avoid potato chips and chocolate. You decide to take your junk food over to a friend's house and leave it there. At dinner, you smile to yourself as you prepare to eat a salad and baked chicken because you plan to thoughtfully focus on eating healthy.

The second scenario demonstrates the concept of living a conscious life. Knowing what you want, choosing how you spend your time, and staying in touch with your feelings are indicators of a conscious life.

There are many techniques you can implement to help you purposely live the way you want to. When you live consciously, you're no longer a victim of the wind, being blown about this way and that way by the circumstances of your life. You can create the life you desire with conscious living.

Try these ideas to get you started and inspire you on your journey:

1. Create the life you want one step at a time. Rome wasn't built in a day. Spend some time exploring what you already love about your life. Also investigate what you'd like to change. Then, think about how you can take deliberate steps to create the life you desire.

2. Seek balance in your life. For example, if you disagree with someone, take time to consider the other person's side of the argument. Allow yourself to change your mind.

3. Live in the present moment. You've most likely heard this suggestion before. But what does it really mean to live in the moment? Consider this example:

While you're visiting your mother, think about her and enjoy your conversation and activities together. Avoid making your store list mentally or trying to recall what else you have to do today. Just stay in the present moment with your mother and focus on what the two of you are doing.

4. Know yourself. Awareness of your likes and dislikes is important to conscious living. Learn what's important to you. Discover what makes you tick, what drives you, and what you find inspiring. Self-understanding is an integral part of living life consciously because if you know your preferences and motivations, you can then create circumstances that will enable you to accomplish your goals.

5. Live your own truth. As a teenager, you might have gravitated toward peers who didn't judge you, which made you feel more comfortable. Perhaps, in actuality, you didn't have all that much in common with them. As an adult, you can now stay more true to your own beliefs. When you live your truth, you stay faithful to what's genuinely important to you.

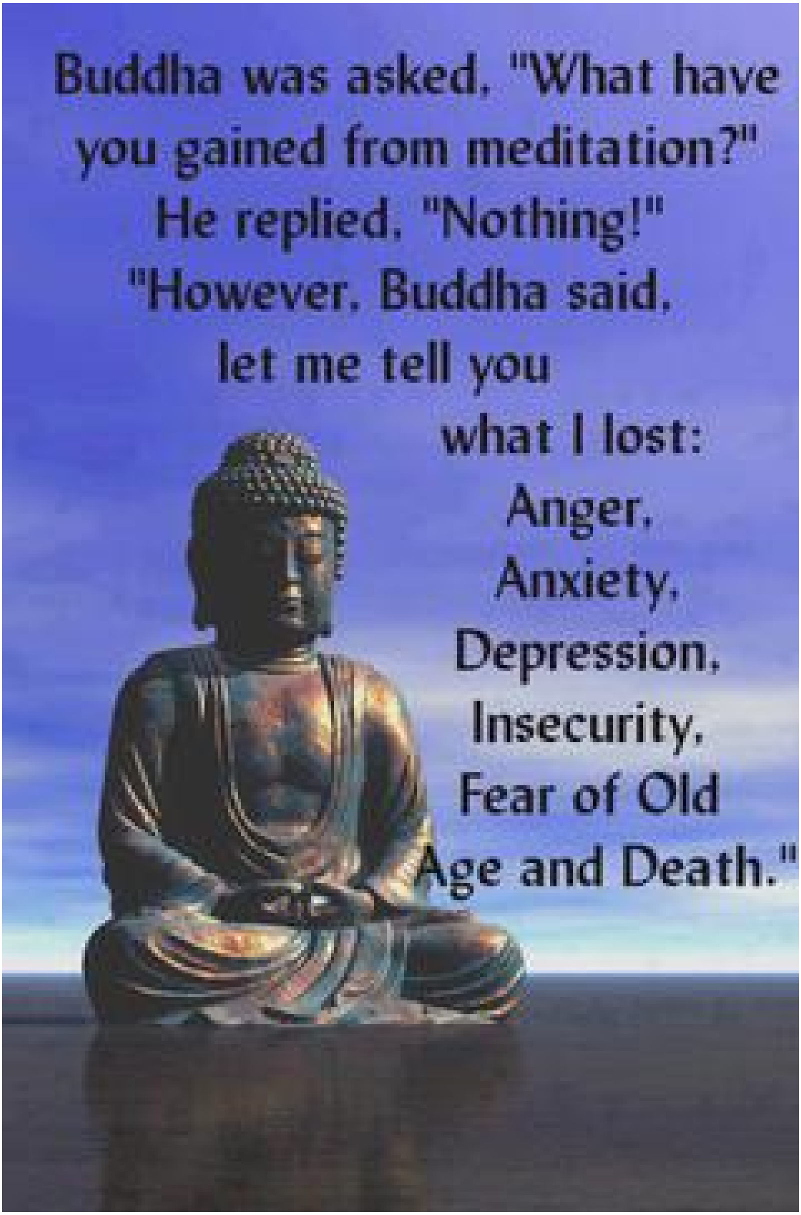
6. Learn to let go of negativity and situations you can't control. Conserve your emotional energy for what you actually can change: yourself and your own life. Now that's conscious living!

7. Take action. Become interested and involved in the goals you've set. Put effort into achieving those objectives and you'll be well on the road to living consciously.

Altering how you live your life can be an ongoing challenge. Selecting just one of the above ideas and putting it into practice will help you begin your journey toward conscious living. Living life consciously will bring you the healthier, more joyful existence that you deserve.

Source:

http://mysuccessprinciples.com/general/7-strategies-for-living-a-conscious-life/



Buddha was asked, "What have
you gained from meditation?"
He replied, "Nothing!"
"However, Buddha said,
let me tell you
what I lost:
Anger,
Anxiety,
Depression,
Insecurity,
Fear of Old
Age and Death."

Examples of Mindfulness Training

Mindfulness Training by Chris Walsh MBBS DPM FAChAM,
Psychiatrist to Turning Point, Ph: 61 (0)3 9347 4300
email: chris@cwalsh.com.au web: www.cwalsh.com.au

1. Urge Surfing – Relapse Prevention

(Alan Marlatt)

Background

Urge surfing is a term coined by Alan Marlatt as part of a program of relapse prevention he developed for people recovering from addictions to alcohol and other drugs. It can actually be used to help with any addictive behaviour such as gambling, overeating, inappropriate sex or any other destructive impulses.

Mindfulness and addiction

The application of mindfulness to addiction is based on the Buddhist view that addiction represents a "false refuge" from the pain and suffering of life (Marlatt, 2002). According to this perspective, engaging in drug use or any other form of mood-altering behaviour is motivated by a strong desire to avoid or escape suffering. To the extent that a person becomes dependent on or attached to whatever provides them with relief, they become vulnerable to addiction. As their attachment to this behaviour grows, their mind becomes increasingly fixated on a "craving" for the relief which this behaviour or substance promises.

Gradually the individual becomes trapped by their addiction as they cling to whatever refuge they have discovered, as though it were the only way to manage the pain of being human.

According to Buddhism, people resort to addictions, not because they are morally weak or physically diseased, but out of a misguided ("ignorant") intense form of attachment to something that appears to offer refuge or temporary immunity from suffering. They want what everyone wants: well being, freedom from pain, an experience of transcending the confines of their lives. But they are simply going about things in a misguided way. They want to avoid suffering; they fail to see that it is their addiction is causing most of their suffering.

All of the practices involved in mindfulness training (e.g. yoga, sitting and walking meditation, body-scan, self-monitoring) are designed to enable a person to track the dynamics of their addictive thoughts, feelings and behaviour and to see them for what they are. Through facing the truth of what they do when they allow themselves become swept up n these behaviours, from a stable position of being grounded in the present moment and connected to their bodily experience, they discover they have choices other than to yield to the seduction of addiction.

Specifically, the potential benefits of mindfulness to a person in recovery include the following:

1) Mindfulness training teaches the client to develop a detached awareness of the thoughts and cravings, without over-identifying with them to the extent they feel compelled to give in to their cravings. He or she learns to relate (with kindness) to their inner cognitive and emotional dynamics without having to react to them.

2) The practice of mindfulness enables the client to see that every human experience is impermanent. Through observing their minds, they notice that their thoughts, feelings and sensations are constantly changing. Pleasant sensations and images rise and pass; and the same is true of unpleasant experiences. This insight is liberating for the

person as it helps them to bear what they regard as unbearable. Marlatt (2002) quotes one client who said: “If things are always changing, my negative moods will also change over time. Meditation helps me to let go and to allow these natural changes to occur, without worrying how I will control them through my drug use. The same goes for feeling high. I cannot stay high all the time, so I get caught in planning where and when I can get high again. The truth is, I’ll never achieve permanent satisfaction. Just knowing that things are always changing is a big load off my mind.” (p.48)

3) The practice of mindfulness enhances the client’s ability to deal with urges and cravings: Marlatt (1985; 1994) teaches his clients to visualise the urge as an ocean wave that begins as a small wavelet and gradually builds up to a large cresting wave. As the urge wave grows in strength, the client’s goal is to surf the urge by allowing it to pass without being “wiped out” by giving into it. He tells clients that urges are simply learned or “conditioned” behaviours triggered by specific cues and high-risk situations. Like a wave, the urge response grows in intensity until it reaches a peak level of craving. Giving in to the urge when it peaks only serves to strengthen or “reinforce” the addictive behaviour. Not acting on the urge, on the other hand, weakens the grip of the addiction and strengthens the experience of freedom and self-confidence. Like any skill, learning how to “urge surf” takes practice and improves over time as the client achieves greater balance on the mindfulness surfboard.

4) Mindfulness training fosters the development of an attitude of compassion towards one’s experience of pain and distress. In addiction treatment, it encourages in both clients and therapist a radical acceptance of ...“where they are at”. Goal setting as a result tends to be more realistic and pragmatic, better attuned to the client’s current stage of change, rather than dominated by some black and white set of criteria as to what constitutes recovery.

Mindfulness training has been gaining support as an effective intervention that helps alleviate the grip of addiction. Langer (1998) has defined mindfulness as a cognitive skill that can be taught to counter the “mindless” state of addiction “in which one is bound by rigid cognitive dichotomies (e.g. using or not using) and a reliance on alcohol and drugs as the only available means of escaping stress and anxiety” (Marlatt et al., 2004).

Teasdale described mindfulness as a skill that enabled people to assume freer and more flexible ways of thinking about their experiences (Teasdale et al., 1995). Rather than see a particular thought as “irrational” and try to change it through argument and debate within one’s own mind, Teasdale saw that we could learn to simply acknowledge a negative thought for what it was (i.e. a well-worn habit of the mind, that probably at some point in our development served a supposed self-protective function), and let it be, without investing it with the power of truth. For Teasdale, mindfulness worked at the meta-cognitive level rather than directly on passing thoughts and feelings.

Adapting this meta-cognitive perspective to addiction, Toneatto (1999) proposed that mindfulness training could teach an addict to adopt a different attitude to their experiences of craving, where he or she could learn to experience the craving on a moment-by moment basis with an attitude of acceptance. The goal for the addict is to get to a place where they could see through the fiction that the substance they desired would solve these cravings. By being able to tolerate the intensity of their cravings on a moment-by moment basis (i.e. the stimulus), without yielding to the pressure to achieve a quick fix (i.e. the response), Toneatto believed that an addict could break their usual conditioned behavioural routine.

The Deora mindfulness program (DMP) The Deora 8-week course in mindfulness training introduced an additional intervention within the Deora service in Dublin’s north inner city, to support individuals in their recovery. Participants learned to use mindfulness to bring their attention into the present moment and become aware of what is happening within them and around them; they learned to pay attention in a particular way to their body sensations, feelings and thoughts, i.e. to allow themselves to notice what is happening in each of these domains of experience, without judging themselves, without suppressing or running away from their experience, and to disengage from familiar negative thinking patterns that heighten distress and inevitably lead to self-destructive coping strategies.

The long term objective of this practice was to enable participants to be aware of those thoughts, feelings, urges and subtle behaviour patterns that led to relapse and to enable them to cope with their vulnerabilities in a more creative way.

The Deora program was an 8-week structured course based on Jon Kabat-Zinn's (1990) Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course. This course was designed by Kabat-Zinn to teach patients in a general hospital setting to cope with stress and physical pain. It incorporates an introduction to basic meditation techniques, Hatha Yoga, Body-Scan training and stress management. In addition to these elements that constitute MBSR, the Deora program also incorporates elements of Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) - a program that adapts mindfulness training for individuals recovering from severe mental health problems and incorporates some generic cognitive therapy skills training (Segal et al., 2002). The evidence base for both of these programs is considerable (see for example, Baer (2006) for a review of the effectiveness of mindfulness training with different care groups).

In recent years, Alan Marlatt and his colleagues in Seattle Washington, USA have been incorporating mindfulness in their approach to relapse prevention with addicted people. They have just produced a course which combines core strategies to prevent relapse within the 8 week course structure developed by Kabat-Zinn. They are calling their program "Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention". The authors met with Alan Marlatt and had some training in his approach to input into their work in Deora. Any future developments of this approach would do well to consider adopting his approach, as it is customised particularly for people in recovery from drug addiction, and incorporates evidence-based relapse prevention strategies.

Urges for substance use rarely last for very long. In fact, they almost never last for longer than about 30 minutes, if there is no opportunity to use. People admitted to a high quality detoxification centre where there is no access to their drug of choice often find it remarkable how little craving they get. If there is no opportunity to use then there is no internal struggle. It is this internal struggle that feeds the cravings.

Trying to fight cravings is like trying to block a waterfall. We end up being inundated. With the approach of mindfulness, we step aside and watch the water (cravings, impulses & urges) just go right past. This is true for everybody, but few addicts ever give themselves the chance to prove it.

Exercise: Reflecting on Urges

Ask yourself whether there have been times when you could not give in to an urge when it presented. Did the urge pass?

Most of us will have had past experiences of urges passing. This is an important strategy to identify, as it can greatly improve self efficacy for riding out urges. The main message is that urges do not have to be acted upon.

Exercise:

Experiencing the Changing Nature of Urges

- Sit with back unsupported in a chair or on a cushion on the floor
- Start Mindfulness Meditation
- Wait for any sense of discomfort e.g. Restlessness, an itch
- Note the desire to move and resist it
- Notice thoughts that arise. e.g. "I wish this itch would go".............."It is driving me crazy".............."This too will pass" - in a calm tone..........."This too will pass" - in an irritable tone.............."It is not bloody well passing!"............."I would love to scratch right now" etc

- These thoughts are just thoughts. So gently bring your attention back to your breath and bodily sensations
- Note the changing position, shape and quality of the discomfort over time. Be interested in feeling it as precisely as you can. Notice how the shape and intensity changes with the cycle of the breath. Is it stronger during the in breath or during the out breath?
- You might find your thoughts spontaneously going to other matters, e.g. Your shopping list, a fight with you partner, a football game, planning a holiday
- These are still just thoughts. Gently bring your attention back to your breath and body sensations. They are probably different again.

You have just observed the changing nature and impermanence of urges. When you notice the physical sensations with interest, you are directly facing the urges rather than feeding them through fighting them.

How fighting urges feeds them.

Often people try to eliminate the urges by distraction or talking themselves out of them. This usually just feeds the urges and creates the illusion that they are interminable until you give in to them. Suppressing a thought feeling or sensation, including pain ultimately increases it. (Clark Ball & Pape 1991, Gold & Wegner 1995, Wegner, Schneider, Carter & White, 1987, Wegner, Schneider, Knutson & McMahon 1991, Cioffi & Holloway 1993)

For example Wegner et al (1987) conducted a series of experiments to assess the effects of thought suppression called the “white bear” experiments. The bear was chosen because one of the researchers remembered reading that when Russian author Tolstoy challenged his brother not to think of a white bear, the brother remained perplexed for quite a while.

In one of the more sophisticated experiments people were shown a movie about white bears. These people were then given a sorting task which required concentration. They were then divided into two groups. The first group was instructed to suppress the white-bear thoughts. The second group was given no instruction to suppress these thoughts. Both groups were asked to hit a counter button every time they thought of white bears while doing the other task. The initial suppression group reported a significantly higher rate of “white bear” thoughts during this time.

Prochaska (1992) et al in their study of how people change habitual behaviour, note that most people go through a long contemplative stage before they actually change. This stage is marked by ambivalence.

Argumentation usually results in the client completing the other side of the ambivalent equation thus maintaining a state of therapeutic paralysis. It is reasonable to assume that the same problem exists with the client’s internal disputation over the ambivalently regarded behaviour. (e.g. "I have to give up smoking because I could get cancer" receives a reply "Yes but that isn’t going to happen to me - at least not for a long time.")

The Technique of Urge Surfing

Mindfulness allows us to bypass these problems associated with avoidance and disputation. Instead of trying to distract from or argue with the unpleasant thoughts, feelings or urges, mindfulness simply makes the thoughts, feelings or urges less important. When we use mindfulness we stay exposed to the thoughts feelings or urges for their natural duration without feeding or repressing them.

In fact, if we just let an urge be - non judgmentally - without feeding it or fighting it (Fighting it is just another way of feeding it anyway) then it will crest subside and pass.

Of course they come back again but over a period of time. However each time you overcome a bout of cravings they become less intense and less frequent if we don't feed the urges and if we don't give in to the addiction. Moreover our mindfulness technique of urge surfing improves. If we have a slip and give into the impulse we will have increased urges for a while. However we can still apply urge surfing all over again.

Urges can be compared with feeding a stray cat. In the beginning, you may want to feed the cat because it cries for food and attention. You may find that it is a nice thing to do and you feel good for being kind. However, your act of feeding the cat encourages it to repeat its cries and attention seeking. You find yourself giving in each time. Over a period of time the cat grows bolder and other cats join it in crying for food and attention.

You may begin to regret your actions, as a large number of strays are now contributing to noise and other problems. But you cannot resist the feeling of ignoring their cries. You may believe that their survival now depends on you, and that your actions are more important than ever. They have you trapped in a cycle of your own pattern of repeated problem behaviours.

If you make a decision to resist feeding the "cat army," there will be loud and pitiful cries for a few days. In fact they will be at their strongest when you have decided not to reinforce their behaviour. Soon, however, they will come to realise that they are no longer being reinforced, and will gradually diminish and disappear.
Your decision to stick with the action you know is best for you will "undo" the problem that you unknowingly built up in the first place.
Urges do go away, but they may be very strong for a short while immediately after quitting. Knowing that they will weaken will help you to continue to surf the impulses that you feel, especially in response to your personal triggers.

Urge Surfing Summary

Purpose

To experience the cravings in a new way and to "ride them out" until they go away

Preparation

1. Remember that urges pass by themselves.
2. Imagined that urges are like ocean waves that arrive crest and subside. They are small when they start, will grow in size, and then will break up and dissipate.
3. Practise mindfulness regularly and especially notice any impulses or urges that appear. Then we are well prepared to ride these waves without giving in to the urge by using mindfulness.

Urge surfing itself

Practise mindfulness

- Watch the breath. Don’t alter it. Let the breath breathe itself.
- Notice your thoughts.
- Without judging them, feeding them or fighting them ***gently*** bring your attention back to the breath

Notice the craving experience as it affects the body.

- Focusing on one area of the body where you can feel the physical sensations associated with the urge and noticing what is occurring.

o Notice quality, position, boundaries & intensity of the sensation
o Notice how these change with the in-breath and out-breath

- Repeating the focusing process with each part of the body involved.
- Be curious about what occurs and notice changes over time.

The key is replacing the fearful wish that craving will go away with interest in our experience. When we do this we notice the cravings change, crest and subside like waves in the ocean. In this way it becomes more manageable.

Teaching Urge Surfing to Clients

It is very difficult for clients to understand urge surfing unless they have an experience of it. Even though the idea of watching cravings come and go makes sense, it is a skill that can only be learnt through practice.

Just as it is easier to coach someone how to kick a football, when they are actually kicking a football is also easier to coach someone as to how to surf urges when they are actually having urges.

We can do this in two ways. Firstly we can create a situation where urges arise and secondly we can respond opportunistically when a craving arises spontaneously in the presence of the therapist.

Manufacturing Opportunities for Urge Surfing.

This is not as difficult as it sounds, as there are many kinds of urges apart from drug cravings. There are urges to scratch, to move, to eat, to drink, to go to the toilet etc. When we reflect on this as it becomes clear that all adults including those who consider they have hopeless addictions have the capacity to have urges come and go without acting on them. After all, unless we are physically ill we can all control our need to go to the toilet!

When we sit with our back supported in a chair or on a cushion on the floor and start mindfulness meditation, sooner or later some sense of discomfort will arise, such as restlessness or an itch. Along with these sensations there will be an urge to move. This is an opportunity to practise urge surfing. So we can notice the difficult sensations that go with this and the thoughts that arise. Instead of acting in our normal way of trying to get rid of this unpleasant feeling, we become curious. We become like natural scientists seeing a strange plant or animal for the first time. We try to describe what we are observing as closely as possible. In this way we replace an aversion with curiosity. So we do this by noticing the physical sensation that goes with the urge as precisely s possible.

If we are guiding a client through this process we then ask them to notice:

- The exact physical sensation in the body,
- It’s quality:
    - Whether it is tight or loose
    - It’s temperature whether it is hot or cold.
- The location of the sensation,
- It’s exact borders
- Whether these borders are well defined and firm like the edge of a football or soft and fuzzy like cotton wool.
- How these qualities vary with the respiratory cycle.

We need to watch it for at least five cycles of breathing to get a sense if it.. Does it get larger or smaller, more or less intense or does the quality of it change?

When we find our mind turning to thoughts, notice the thoughts and come back to the physical sensations of the urge.

Opportunistically Teaching Urge Surfing

Sometimes when talking to a client an urge arises spontaneously. Sometimes it can be spotted as a subtle smile on the face as the client fondly remembers using the drug. At this point, the therapist can say to the client: “It looks like you might be having an urge to use right now.”

If the client agrees to this, then the therapist can ask them: “How does this urge feel in your body? Whereabouts is it in your body?”

Then slowly guide the client through the questions that define the sensations or the urge in the body.

At first there will be a resistance and a desire to go into the story about the urges. It is then helpful to explain to the client that we can go into the story later. We can explain: ““It would be good if you could become aware of how this urge feels in your body right now. I'm very interested in knowing exactly how it feels for you. This is an opportunity for you to practise urge surfing. So see if you can just bear with it for a little while."

Then ask the client to define the edges of this sensation, where they are and the quality of the edges, then the quality of the actual sensation itself including the temperature, and finally how it changes with the cycle of breathing. Then you can ask the client if the sensations have changed since you first started talking about it. Any observation of change is good. It does not matter if the feeling is stronger. What is important is that the client can see the sensation is not one solid unchanging entity.

So having done this, it is worthwhile to then divert the client's attention a little by talking about the matter at hand that elicited the urge in the first place. After doing this for a few minutes, it is very useful to return attention to the body and ask the client how the sensation feels now. At this point with their increased level of mindful awareness of the physical sensation, they are capable of noticing how the urge has changed. It has often changed dramatically. When a client has had the opportunity to be taken though this three or four times, they begin to have enough faith in the process to practise urge surfing successfully by themselves.

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2. Working with our unconscious better

If I had to pick one thing to help one become aware of the unconscious, it would be to spend quality time with yourself each day. Here the intention is self-inquiry, to know yourself at a deeper level through contemplation, meditation, and prayer.

Other things that build self-awareness and help you understand what is below the surface are the following:

1. Read a few pages each day in a self-help book that you find applies to your personal challenges and issues.

2. Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. Journal-write about your conflicts to allow them to become more conscious to you. Feel your feelings – cry if you need to, feel your upset and anger if you need to; allow feelings inside of you to surface.

3. Watch your dreams and daydreams. Look for patterns and messages about your issues, actions, about what you really want. If, for example, you daydream about writing a book often, take this as a serious message from your unconscious. If you dream about moving over and over, you may need to look at your current living situation and consider that the unconscious is nudging you in a new direction, not necessarily to move physically, but to do something different to get unstuck emotionally.

4. Notice if you are envious of anyone. Ask yourself what they have that you want in your life. Then use them as a role model. Observe them to learn how they accomplish what you want to create.

5. Psychotherapy is a supportive way to look at yourself and your problems, to move beyond conditioning from the past, and to find good solutions to life's dilemmas.

6. Ask people you trust to give you honest feedback about you. What do they see as your strengths and weaknesses? Use this simply as a consideration of some things that may be in your blind spot.

7. Remember to acknowledge the things that are working in your life to build gratitude awareness. Make a list every day of the things you are grateful for.

Source:

Suzanne E. Harrill
http://innerworkspublishing.com/mindfulness-and-consciousness-as-paths-to-self-awareness/

3. “Just Worrying”

Labelling Technique

As a preamble to discussing this technique with a client it is often helpful to differentiate worrying from constructive problem solving. Worrying involves repetitive circular thinking, which is associated with anxiety and produces no enactable practical outcomes. This technique simply involves a person labelling worry as “just worrying” and then bringing their attention back to their breath or to simply change the subject of their thinking.

Every time a person catches themselves worrying they just label it again and change the subject. It doesn't matter if a person does it 10 times in one minute or if they only realize they have been worrying after a period of 2 hours and then apply the technique. The important thing is that the person applies the technique when they realize they are worrying.

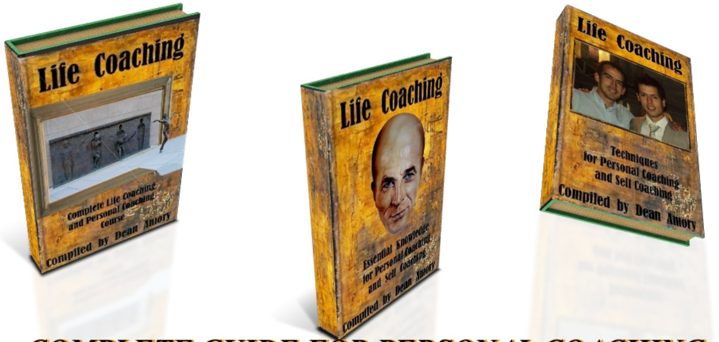
This technique involves no criticism or internal struggle, just simple non-judgemental labelling. Therefore it is important in this regard that the client does not change the label from "just worrying" to "don't worry".

This technique is very powerful and most people find that their worrying thoughts dissipate almost totally within a few days. Then they usually start worrying about a week later because they have forgotten about the technique through lack of need to use it. At that point a reminder of the technique usually suffices.

The same technique can be applied to other disturbing repetitive mental events using labels such as "just doubting" or "just criticizing". This is subtly but significantly different to avoidance. It is not running away from the aversive mental stimulus. Rather it is the non-judgemental labelling which is encapsulated in the word "just"

Source:

Mindfulness Training by Chris Walsh MBBS DPM FAChAM, Psychiatrist to Turning Point, Ph: 61 (0)3 9347 4300 email: chris@cwalsh.com.au web: www.cwalsh.com.au


Life Coaching
Complete Life Coaching and Personal Coaching course
Compiled by Dean Amory
Life Coaching
Essential Knowledge for Personal Coaching and Self Coaching
Compiled by Dean Amory
Life Coaching
Techniques for Personal Coaching and Self Coaching
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4. Coping with negative experiences

Using mindfulness to cope with negative experiences (thoughts, feelings, events)

As we become more practised at using mindfulness for breathing, body sensations and routine daily activities, so we can then learn to be mindful of our thoughts and feelings, to become observers, and then more accepting of them. This results in less distressing feelings, and increases our ability to enjoy our lives.

With mindfulness, even the most disturbing sensations, feelings, thoughts, and experiences, can be viewed from a wider perspective as passing events in the mind, rather than as "us", or as being necessarily true. (Brantley 2003)

When we are more practised in using mindfulness, we can use it even in times of intense distress, by becoming mindful of the actual experience as an observer, using mindful breathing and focussing our attention on the breathing, listening to the distressing thoughts mindfully, recognising them as merely thoughts, breathing with them, allowing them to happen without believing them or arguing with them. If thoughts are too strong or loud, then we can move our attention to our breath, the body, or to sounds around us.

Jon Kabat-Zinn uses the example of waves to help explain mindfulness.

Think of your mind as the surface of a lake or an ocean. There are always waves on the water, sometimes big, sometimes small, sometimes almost imperceptible. The water's waves are churned up by winds, which come and go and vary in direction and intensity, just as do the winds of stress and change in our lives, which stir up waves in our mind. It's possible to find shelter from much of the wind that agitates the mind. Whatever we might do to prevent them, the winds of life and of the mind will blow.

"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf"
(Kabat-Zinn 2004)

source:

www.getselfhelp.co.uk/mindfulness.htm www.get.gg
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5. Some Basic Training Exercises

Exercise Text found at: : http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com

Exercise 1: Mindful Breathing/Anapanasati

Anapanasati is essentially Samadhi focused on your breathing. In other words, your breathing becomes the object of meditation and concentration. Like Samadhi, this is a skill that requires practice. Also like Samadhi, Anapanasati has the benefits of relaxation, stress reduction, and building the capacity for maintained concentration. In many ways, Anapanasati is the final step before beginning the practice of Vipasanna.

To practice Anapanasati, begin by taking a few deep breaths to relax. Now, breathe normally through your nose and pay attention to your inhalations and exhalations. Try to find a spot where your breath is most noticeable. This may be your chest, belly, throat, the tips of your nostrils, or elsewhere. Follow your breath as it moves in and out of you. You may want to try counting your breaths (1-10 and then start over). You may also want to name your inhalations by saying to yourself, "In" and name your exhalations by saying to yourself, "Out." If you need to use counting or naming, use them as tools to help you maintain a focus on your breathing. Do not let them become the object of your focus. With practice, you may no longer need these tools.

Read more:

http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-8-mindful-breathing-anapanasati/

http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-9-mindfulness-meditation-vipassana/

Exercise 2: Mindfulness Meditation/Vipassana

In Vipassana, the object of meditation is one's own consciousness in the present moment. While we continue to use the breath as an anchor to the present moment, it is no longer the primary object. Instead, we become aware of whatever the most prominent stimulus is in that moment, and we allow that stimulus to be our object. It may be a thought, a feeling, a physical sensation, a sound, a smell, or just about anything else. Whatever it is, we simply notice it without becoming involved in thinking about it. In this sense, we are working toward achieving an objective and non-reactive state of mind. At the same time, Vipassana is not primarily a relaxation technique and we are not trying to flee from reality or go into a trance. The goal is active and objective observation of our subjective experience, without attachment.

In terms of actual practice, try to find a quiet place where people, phones, and other distractions will not be an issue. Wear comfortable clothing and consider taking off your shoes. Sit up straight, either on the floor (perhaps on a cushion) or in a straight back chair. Place your hands on your knees or folded in your lap. Keep your eyes open, but not focused on any particular point or object. Take two or three deep breaths and begin to focus on the present moment. As you begin, use your breathing to anchor you to the here-and-now. As you continue, notice the most prominent stimulus, whatever it is, without engaging it. Try to sit still and maintain focus for 20 minutes. Just as you are not reacting impulsively to the thoughts or feelings that you have, do not react impulsively to physical discomforts as they arise. For instance, if your nose itches, do not immediately reach up to scratch it. If you want, you can choose to scratch your nose. Or, if you want, you can choose just to let it be. Whatever you decide, act in mindfulness and with intentionality.

Exercise 3: The Park Bench

Imagine you are sitting on a park bench. As people pass by you, notice them. For a time, you allow them to become the centre of your focus. You notice the older woman walking the small dog. You notice the young man jogging. You note their appearance. You observe their behaviour. For as long as they are in front of you, they deserve your focus. If two people are in front of you, you notice them both. You do not need to invite anyone over to your bench to sit down and talk. Nor do you need to get up from your bench to walk with anyone. In as much as you engage them, you do so only from a distance. You observe them objectively from your bench. When they move on and are no longer in front of you, you let them go as you turn your attention to the next passerby.

This park bench experience is analogous to an exercise that can be done with your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and observations of the space around you (the three levels of your expanding "bubble of awareness" from the first exercise). Imagine that the people in the park are your thoughts, feelings, etc. Sit quietly and allow yourself to become aware of your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and surroundings. At any given moment, whatever is the most prominent thought, feeling, sensation, or observation is the person in front of you in the park. Notice it. Describe it. For as long as it is the most prominent object allow it to be the focus of your attention. As it fades away, allow something else to become the focus of your attention. You do not need to chase after anything. You do not need to invite anything to sit with you. You are an objective observer. Just notice it and let it move on.

Read more: http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-3-the-park-bench/

Exercise 4: Visualization

This exercise has a strong focus on your mental self. Nonetheless, allow it to be a holistic (mind, body, spirit) experience. It involves mental imagery and the use of imagination. For some people, these seem to come easily, while for others they require more practice.

Sitting in a relaxed position, begin by taking a few deep breaths to calm yourself and bring your mind to the present moment. Begin to visualize a place or space where you can be at peace. You may find it most helpful to imagine a new place, where you have never been. It can resemble something familiar, but should be a unique space. It could be a sandy beach, a quiet library, a spot deep within a forest, or perhaps a large sitting room with a fireplace. Whatever place or space you imagine is fine, as long as it will allow you to enter it and relax there for a time. This space can be a sanctuary.

As you begin to see your sanctuary, enter into that space with your whole self. Choose to sit down in your space, to stand, or to walk around it. Look around and take in every detail. You do not have to create the details of your space. They are already there: allow them to come to your mind. Notice the sights (trees, sand, books). Begin to notice the sounds (waves, wind, the crackling of the fire). Notice the smells (flowers, saltwater, smoke). Simply enjoy your space for as long as you want, allowing it to become more tangible and develop beyond what you initially noticed. When you are finished in your space, take some deep breaths and leave.

Your sanctuary is unique and personal. It will reflect much of who you are as a person. As you continue to practice this exercise, you may return to this same sanctuary or you may visit a new space. You may find some spaces appropriate for relaxation and others appropriate for gaining insight. Go wherever feels right for that moment. In time, you may find that your initial sanctuary allows for immense amounts of expansion and exploration.

Read more:
http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-6-visualization/

Exercise 5: Concentration/Samadhi Meditation

This form of meditation focuses the attention on an "object." The object could be an actual physical object, a sound, an image, a mantra, or just about anything else. The object of focus is not the most important piece. Instead, what is most important is simply the process of learning to concentrate. Learning this skill will have its own benefits: relaxation and stress reduction. But on top of these benefits, learning to concentrate will be a skill that transfers over to the practice of Vipassana (mindfulness meditation).

In essence Samadhi is simple: First, pick an object. Second, concentrate on it. In practice, it can be much more complicated. Try starting by taking a few deep breaths to relax. You may find that maintaining concentration on the object can be difficult. Every time you notice that your attention has drifted, and it will drift, simply bring your focus back to the object. Try to notice the object like you noticed the raisin. Look at it through a microscope. Take in every aspect of the object and appreciate it. Be patient and do not be too hard on yourself, maintaining concentration on any object can be difficult. Start with only a few minutes and progress into longer periods of time.

Read more: http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-7-concentration-samadhi-meditation/

Exercise 6: Mindful Movement Exercises

Source:

Excerpted from "Mindful Movements: 10 Excercises for Well-Being" by Thich Nhat Hanh and Wietske Vriezen. Parallax Press (2008)
http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Buddhism/2008/09/A-Week-of-Mindful-Movements.aspx

Vietnamese Buddhist monk, author, and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh has developed exercises called Mindful Movements. These simple, deep motions, based in yoga and tai-chi, have been taught and practiced in Plum Village for over two decades.

In his new, tenderly illustrated book, "Mindful Movements," he writes: "The Mindful Movements are another wonderful way of connecting your mind and body in mindfulness. They are a way to touch the sky, to smile at your own body, and to touch your heart. When you do them, please enjoy each part of each movement. They are not like aerobics, where you have to move as quickly as possible. There is no need to rush. When I do them, I find I cannot help smiling. I hope they bring you joy."

One way of practising the mindful movements of Thich Nhat Hanh, is to try a different movement for every day of the week Do each one four times before moving on to the next. Have fun!

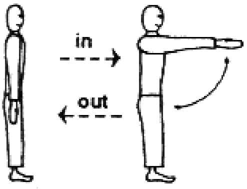
Mindful Movements

Source: www.wou.edu/~brazaj/mpc.doc
MPC Training Manual, by Jerry Braza, Ph.D. and Doug Parker,
Mindfulness Practice Center (MPC), Western Oregon University

The Community of Interbeing- Manual of Practice suggests ten basic movements of exercise that can strengthen mindfulness in our everyday movements. These exercises can be done individually in groups.

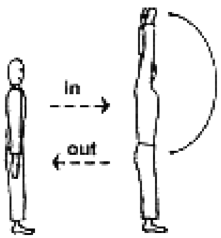
- Each movement is done for three repetitions before proceeding to the next. "Body movements should be flowing and graceful and not too rapid."[1]
- All exercises begin from a standing position with arms hanging loosely at our sides.
- What makes these exercises unique from basic stretching exercises is that we control our breathing during the exercises. On the in-breath we execute a particular position and on the out-breath we return to the starting position.

Mindful Movement 1



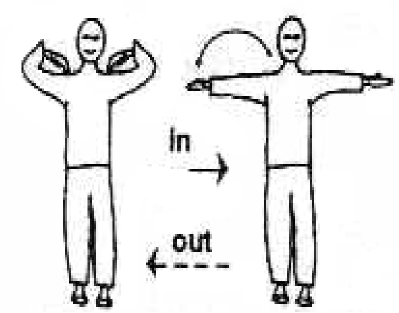
Stand upright with feet slightly apart facing forward. On the in-breath raise both arms so that they are horizontal, hands loose and palms facing downward. On the out-breath lower both arms to your side.

Mindful Movement 2



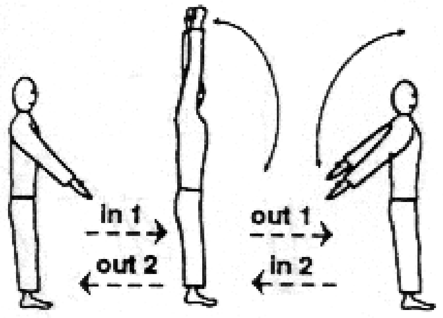
Start as in Movement 1 with palms facing inwards. On the in-breath raise hands above the head keeping the arms straight to make a semi circle in front of the body. Stretch the body with out the feet leaving the ground. On the out-breath reverse the movement returning the hands.

Mindful Movement 3



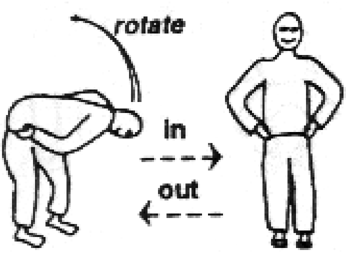
Start with feet slightly apart and arms bent at the elbow and finger tips touching the top of each shoulder. The arms are in the same plane as the body. On the in-breath stretch both arms so that the arms are fully outstretched, palms upward. On the out-breath return the arms again to the start position.

Mindful Movement 4



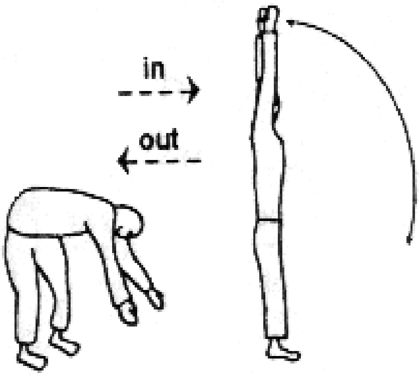
Start with the arms and eyes facing forward. Palms should be together at waist level in front of the body. On the first in-breath lift the arms (keeping them straight) the hands stay together at eye level, keeping the movement continuous take the arms up and out over the shoulders (hands are now separated) and on the first out-breath bring them down behind the body (thus making a big circle with each hand). With the second in-breath reverse the movement bringing the hands above the head and then on the second out breath bring hands down to the start position.

Mindful Movement 5



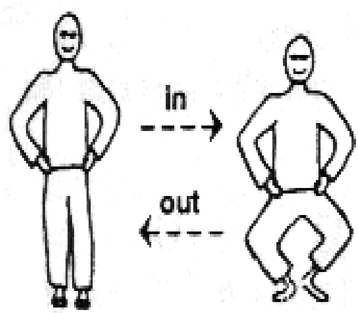
Stand with the feet slightly apart and hands resting on the hips. Start by leaning forward with head at waist level, legs straight. With the first in-breath rotate the body clockwise pivoting around the waist. The head should describe a wide circle and then after the in-breath is leaning backwards and upright. On the out-breath reverse the movement taking the head back to its start position in front of the body. After repeating this cycle three times repeat the movement but rotating the body anti-clockwise.

Mindful Movement 6



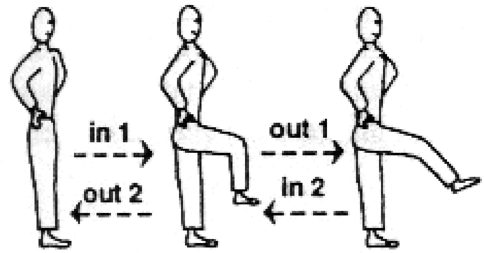
Start by leaning forward allowing the arms to hang downward. With the first in-breath lift up the body from the waist, taking the hands in a wide semi-circle so that the arms stretch upwards. Stretch the whole body. On the out-breath reverse the movement returning the body to its starting position, leaning forward arms loosely downwards.

Mindful Movements 7



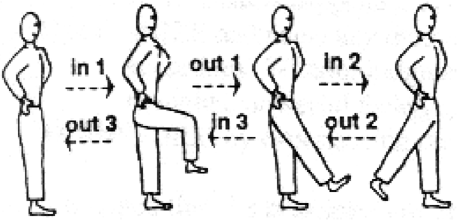
Stand with hands resting on hips and feet together at the ankles, slightly apart at the toes. On the in-breath stand on tip-toe and then with back kept straight up and hands kept on hips bend at the knees taking the torso down towards the ground. Ankles should stay together. With the out-breath straighten the legs and return to the original position.

Mindful Movement 8



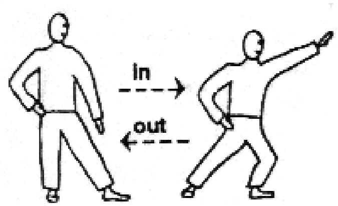
Stand upright with hands on hips, feet together on the ground. With the first in-breath raise the right leg so the knee is just below the level of your waist, the lower leg hanging downwards. With the first out-breath extend the lower half of the leg so the leg is almost straight. With the second in-breath describe a semi-circle with the right foot pivoting around the ankle and bring the lower leg down to its position after the first in-breath. With the second out-breath return the leg to its start position beside the body. After completing this cycle three times with the right leg, repeat three times with the left leg.

Mindful Movement 9



Stand upright with hands on hips, feet together on the ground. With the first in-breath bend the right leg and then with the out-breath straighten and extend the leg out in front of the body with the foot just above the ground. With the second in-breath swing the foot around the body to the side, keeping the leg straight and describing as wide a circle as possible so that the foot ends up behind the body with the toe touching the ground. With the second out-breath reverse this movement so the foot returns to its position extended in front of the body. With the third out-breath return the foot to its start position. After repeating this cycle three times repeat the movement using the left leg.

Mindful Movement 10



Stand upright your feet a good step from each other. The left foot pointing outwards at right angles, to the side. The left hand rests on the hip and the right arm points down the right leg with fingers extended. Your face is looking sideward in the same direction as the left foot. With the in-breath bend the right leg and raise the right arm stretching and extending it just above shoulder level. This should produce a stretch along the left side of the body. With the out-breath reverse the movement returning to the start position. After repeating this cycle three times repeat the movement on the other side of the body (i.e. bending the left leg).

Exercise 7: Deora Core Elements of Training

source: The DEORA Mindfulness Program by TONY BATES and FAYE SCANLAN for Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health

Excerpt of Chapter 2 - Learning to practice mindfulness: Core elements of training within the 8-week Deora mindfulness program

"Time and again we miss out on the great treasures of our lives because we are so restless. In our minds we are always somewhere else. We are seldom in the place where we stand and in the time that is now." (John O'Donnohue, Anamchara, 1997)

Human beings find it very hard to be still. We are frightened of our inner lives and spend a great deal of our energies running from ourselves. One of the participants in this Deora program described how having a bath was impossible for him. He simply couldn't cope with being alone with himself. If we are to achieve any kind of friendship with ourselves, as we are, we have to find a way back to being at ease in our own company.

There are many wounds that we carry in our minds and bodies, which make it hard to come into a place of stillness where we connect with who we are. Mindfulness meditation is a simple practice that allows us to come home to ourselves and to rest in the present moment.

It teaches us how to ground ourselves and to achieve a perspective on our thoughts and feelings that is liberating. We learn to see our emotions as part of who we are, but not as the defining element of who we are. Without the freedom that this perspective brings, we have little choice but to behave in ways that shut out our inner lives.

Addictive behaviours are often an attempt to escape distress and achieve an altered state of consciousness that feels tolerable, if only briefly. Mindfulness gives us a different kind of freedom, where we become able to connect with our experience, hold it in awareness and consider more adaptive ways to manage our inner and outer lives. We learn to cultivate a radically different relationship to negative experiences through accepting them and seeing them for what they are. Switching from avoidance and self-criticism to acceptance is a key feature of mindfulness training.

Acceptance is often misunderstood; it is not a passive submissiveness or resignation. It is about learning to accept things as they are; the ability to be in the moment without wanting it to be something else. It allows us to see more clearly what needs to change. It allows us to have a different relationship with our thoughts, where we see they are just thoughts and not truths. Mindfulness is not a harsh discipline, but one that only works when you relate to yourself with a light touch and a lot of compassion.

The objective is to begin to recognize that the mind creates a running commentary and to reduce our degree of identification with our thoughts. This allows us the space to see the possibility for change.

To begin the practice of mindfulness, we need to choose to stop and pay attention to our experience. Paying attention to our experience in a mindful way grounds us in the present moment and gives us stability. Mindfulness steadies us and enables us to rest in the present moment. It also puts us in touch with our innate wisdom and creativity and informs us how we might best address the challenges that confront us in any given moment of our lives.

Steadying the Mind

Try focusing on your next three breaths, without trying to change them in any way. You may find that you can connect with your breath most easily by noticing the sensations in your tummy as it expands and recedes with each in-breath and out-breath. Or you may find it easier to simply notice the sensation of air moving in and out your nose, with each in- and out-breath.

Don’t try to change anything, don’t even try to relax, just bring your attention gently back to your breath and see if can you stay with it as it moves in, and out, of your body. (If this is hard for you to do, try focusing on your out-breath, and regard your in-breath as a natural pause between each out-breath.) How did that feel? Strange, relaxing, frightening or neutral? Even now as you read this, it may be possible for you to delegate some portion of your attention to your breath, and notice what happens with it over time. Paying attention to your in-breath and our out-breath, you might think that your breathing has changed, but if you observe it more carefully, you may discover that you have not really changed anything; you are simply letting your breath flow more naturally. As long as your breathing feels pleasant, you know you are doing something right.

You are not trying to change anything; you are simply taking time to bring your attention back to your breath. You do not have to struggle or make an effort. If you do, you will disrupt the natural flow of your breath and notice yourself becoming uneasy. What you are trying to do, as best you can, is to simply be with your breath and allow yourself to slow down and enjoy the present moment.

By bringing our mind into the present moment, we achieve mindfulness. When we bring the mind home in this way, we also become more aware of our body. If we continue to practice mindful breathing, we can find ourselves easing back into our bodies in a very short space of time. We begin to feel more connected, more grounded, and also more alert to all that's happening in and around us.

Breathing is the bridge to the body. Attending deliberately to our breathing helps to anchor our attention in the present moment, and gives us a platform from which we can observe the changing patterns of our thoughts and feelings, as they move and shift from one concern to another, from one sensation to another. It is important to note what comes up for you when you slow down in this way, and then to let it go and see what happens next.

Because our mind so naturally wanders, it requires practice to be mindful. There are many different exercises that can guide your practice and some may suit you more than others. The following are a sample of the exercises we used most frequently in the Deora course.

Basic Breathing Exercises

Exercise 1: In/Out

The first breathing exercise is "In/Out". Very simply, we choose to pay attention to the movement of the breath in and out of our body.

We may notice the sensation of air passing in and out of our nostrils or we may keep our attention on the sensations of our tummies expanding and contracting as we inhale and exhale. Focus wherever you find it easiest to stay with your breathing.

To help you keep your mind on your breathing, you might try saying silently to yourself, with each in-breath:

"Breathing in, I know I'm breathing in", and with each out-breath: "Breathing out, I know I am breathing out". As you become more keenly aware of your in-breath as your in-breath and your out-breath as your out-breath, just use the word "in" when breathing in, and "out" when breathing out.

You may notice your mind wandering, and when you do, just accept that this is what happens to everyone, and then gently escort you attention back to your in-breath and your out-breath. And if your mind wanders a thousand times, just very gently notice that's it's drifted off and bring it back to the breath, a thousand times. You don't have to suppress your thinking or try to 'control' it in some way, you only have to come back to your breathing and enjoy this breath, and this breath, and this breath…

Exercise 2: Following your breath

Following your breath for the full duration of your breath

The first exercise described above naturally leads into this second exercise which focuses your attention a little more closely on the duration of your breath.

Called "Long/Short", this exercise invites you to let your attention follow the flow of your in-breath for however long it takes, and similarly, to keep your attention on the out-breath for its full duration, however long that takes. The terms "long" and "short" do not mean that you should either lengthen or shorten your breath. They simply direct you to follow the course of your breath, whatever its duration.

Rather than try and control your breath in any way, you are invited to 'get out of your own way' and to allow your breath enjoy itself. If your in-breath is short, let it be short; if it is long, let it be long.

When you take time to become aware of your breathing, you may notice that the quality of your breathing changes slightly. It may naturally slow down and deepen, without you making any effort to do so. Mindfulness, without you doing anything, brings a calmness to your breathing, and in turn to your body and your mind.

Exercise 3: Paying attention to your posture

As you sit and enjoy your breathing in and breathing out, notice your posture. It helps to embody in your posture the state of mind you are trying to create through your practice. On the one hand you want to find a posture that's comfortable and restful; but you also want to find a way of sitting that embodies a certain alertness and awareness. In practicing mindful meditation, you are not trying to switch off from or tune out reality. What you're trying to do when you practice mindfulness is to wake up to what is happening in your life, in the present moment. And so it helps to sit comfortably, whether on a chair, or a cushion, or a stool, but also to sit in a dignified and erect position, which embodies this state of wakefulness.

Find a way of sitting that allows you to sit for whatever period of time feels right to you. It might be 1 minute, it might be 45 minutes. It is worth taking time to find a sitting or lying position that feels comfortable and that allows you remain alert. A chair may be fine for you, but it is usually recommended that you sit up straight with your back away from the chair, to help you maintain a degree of alertness.

Be mindful of what muscles you need to engage to help you remain alert and dignified, and see if you can relax all your other muscles.

For example, you may become aware of tension you are holding in your shoulders. You don't need this tension to remain alert, so allow yourself to relax and drop your shoulders.

Notice also your facial muscles and be aware of any tension you may be holding there. You have three hundred muscles in your face which can both hold and express all that you feel. For now, just see if you can notice any tension you are holding in your face and gently let it go, by smiling.

Exercise 4: Accepting whatever is happening

Enjoy the sensation of being able to breathe, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whatever you are feeling. Be aware of the preciousness of this moment and of the simple wonder of being alive. Enjoy this moment; come home to whatever is happening for you. It may be that your life is in a good space. Take the time to acknowledge and appreciate that. Or maybe you are in a really tough place in your life at the moment. Perhaps you feel confused, tired, sad or alone. See if you can allow whatever is there to be there, accepting your pain as it is in this moment, rather than trying to push it away from you. By taking time to be mindful, you create an opportunity to bring a kindness to wherever you are hurting in your body or mind.

Notice your pain, and with care and gentleness, allow it to be there. It's what's happening right now. It won't last, nothing lasts forever.

But right now, your pain is coming from a part of you that has no other way to communicate with you. Try being with yourself, and letting yourself be. Notice how your thoughts try to carry you away, possibly regretting something you did or didn't do, or possibly trying to frighten you with worries about what might or could happen sometime in the future. Notice these thoughts, notice what concerns rise up in your mind and smile. And then ever so gently, let your thoughts be, and return your attention to your breath. Don't fight, don't struggle, just let yourself be, and be kind to whatever part of you is hurting.

It often happens in the course of our practice that some thought or realization hits us like a bolt out of the blue and shakes us to the core.

Perhaps some problem we had been trying to block out of our awareness, perhaps some appointment or commitment we had forgotten.

Because you have taken time to be still, the mind has an opportunity to remind you of something important. When this happens, note what has been brought to your attention, thank your practice for reminding you about this and then let it go, as you gently return your attention to your breathing. The aim of what you are doing is simply to be present to your breathing as best you can, and not become drawn into endless ruminations. There will be time to attend to these matters later, for now, simply note that they have emerged into your awareness and let them recede into the background as you return to enjoying the present moment.

When the mind is relatively stable and focused, any object in the field of our attention - be it a pressing concern or a piece of music - becomes more vivid and clear. And when the mind is clear, it is more likely that real understanding will be achieved, and that a wiser course of action will follow.

Exercise 5: The 3-minute breathing space

This exercise combines all of the above and when you have practiced it repeatedly, it becomes a resource that you can tap into at several points in your day.

STEP 1: Bringing your awareness back home

Begin by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture, whether you are sitting or standing. If you like, close your eyes. Then, bringing your awareness to your inner experience, ask: 'What is my experience right now?' - 'What thoughts are going through the mind?'

As best you can, acknowledging whatever thoughts or images are passing through your mind without becoming drawn into them. Just letting them pass in and out of your mind, taking care to see what they are about. And then letting them go.

What feelings are here? Turning toward any sense of emotional discomfort or unpleasant feelings, acknowledging their presence, and allowing them to be there, rather than pushing them away.

What physical or bodily sensations are here right now? Perhaps quickly scanning the body to pick up any sensations or tightness or pain that may be in your body. See them for what they are and let them be.

STEP 2: Anchoring your awareness

Then gently lead your attention back to the physical sensations of your breath, as it passes in and out of your body. Bring your attention to the movement of your belly. As you breathe in, and breathe out… feeling the sensations of the belly wall expanding as the breath comes in… and falling back as the breath goes out. Follow the breath all the way in and all the way out, and use your breath to anchor yourself, to ground yourself, in the present moment.

STEP 3: Opening your awareness

Now expand the field of your awareness around your breathing so that, in addition to the sensations of the breath, it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture and facial expression. If you become aware of any sensations of discomfort, tension, or resistance, zero in on them by breathing into them on each in-breath and breathing out from them on each out-breath as you soften and open.

Whatever you notice, whatever sensations or feelings are there, let them be, they are already there. As best you can, expand your awareness to take in all that's happening around you. What do you hear? What do you sense is happening in the environment around you?

Exercise 6: Extended sitting meditation

(from "A Mindful Way through Depression, by Williams, Teasdale and Kabat-Zinn, 2007)

SETTLING

1. Settle in a comfortable sitting position, either on a straight-backed chair or on a soft surface on the floor with your bottom supported by cushions or on a low stool or meditation bench. If you use a chair, sit away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting. If you sit on the floor, it is helpful if your knees can actually touch the floor, although that may not happen at the beginning; experiment with the height of the cushions or stool until you feel completely supported.

2. Allow the back to adopt an erect, dignified, and comfortable posture. If sitting on a chair, have your feet flat on the floor with legs uncrossed. Gently close your eyes if that feels comfortable. If not, let your gaze fall unfocused on the floor four or five feet in front of you.

BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE BODY

3. Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch, contact, and pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and with whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations.

FOCUSING ON THE SENSATIONS OF BREATHING

4. Now bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in the belly as the breath moves in and out of the body, just as you did lying down.

5. Focus your awareness on the mild sensations of stretching as the abdominal wall gently expands with each in-breath and on the sensations of gentle release as the abdominal wall deflates with each out-breath. As best you can, stay in touch with the changing physical sensations in your abdomen for the full duration of the in-breath and the full duration of the out-breath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses

between an in-breath and the following out-breath and between an out-breath and the following in-breath.

As an alternative, if you prefer, focus on a place in the body where you find the sensations of the breath most vivid and distinct (such as the nostrils).

6. There is no need to try to control your breathing in any way – simply let your body breathe by itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of allowing to the rest of your experience – there is nothing that needs to be fixed, and no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply surrender to your experience as it is, without requiring that it be any different.

WORKING WITH THE MIND WHEN IT WANDERS

7. Sooner or later (usually sooner), the mind will wander away from the focus on the breath sensations in the belly, getting caught up in thoughts, planning, or daydreams, or just aimlessly drifting about.

Whatever comes up, whatever the mind is pulled to or absorbed by, is perfectly okay. This wandering and getting absorbed in things is simply what minds do; it is not a mistake or a failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer focused on the breath, you might want to actually congratulate yourself because you've already come back enough to know it. You are, once more, aware of your experience.

You might like to briefly acknowledge where the mind has been (noting what is on your mind and perhaps making a mental note: "thinking, thinking" or "planning, planning" or "worrying, worrying"). Then, gently escorting your attention back to the breath sensations in the belly, as you bring your awareness to the feeling of this in-breath or this out-breath, whichever is here as you return.

8. However often you notice that the mind has wandered (and this will quite likely happen over and over and over again), each time take note of where the mind has been, then gently escort your attention back to the breath and simply resume attending to the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each in-breath and with each out-breath.

9. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as opportunities to cultivate greater patience and acceptance within yourself and some compassion toward your experience. Continue with the practice for ten minutes, or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience with the here and now each time that you notice that the mind has wandered off and is no longer in touch with the abdomen, in touch with this very breath in this very moment.

Exercise 7: The Body Scan

(from "A Mindful Way through Depression, by Williams, Teasdale and Kabat-Zinn, 2007)

1. Make yourself comfortable lying down on your back, in a place where you will feel warm and undisturbed. You can lie on a mat or rug on the floor or on your bed. Allow your eyes to close gently.

2. Take a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations in your body. When you are ready, bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body, especially to the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the floor or bed. On each out-breath, allow yourself to sink a little deeper into the mat or bed.

3. To get into the most helpful mindset, remind yourself that this will be a time for "falling awake" rather than falling asleep. Remind yourself as well that the idea here is to be aware of your experience as it is unfolding, however it is. It is not to change the way you are feeling or to become more relaxed or calmer. The intention of this practice is to bring awareness to any and all sensations you are able to be aware of (or lack of sensation) as you focus your attention systematically on each part of the body in turn.

4. Now bring your awareness to the sensations in the belly, becoming aware of the changing patterns of sensations in the abdominal wall as the breath moves into the body and as it moves out of the body.

Take a few minutes to feel the sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out, as the belly rises on the in-breath and falls on the out-breath.

5. Having connected with the sensations in the belly, now bring the focus or spotlight of your attention down the left leg, into the left foot, and all the way to the toes. Focus on each of the toes in turn, bringing a gentle, interested, affectionate attention to begin with and investigate the quality of the sensations you find, perhaps noticing the sense of contact between the toes, a sense of tingling, warmth, perhaps numbness, whatever is here, perhaps even no sensations at all if that is the case. It is all okay. In fact, whatever you are experiencing is okay; it is what is here right now.

6. When you are ready, on an in-breath, feel or imagine the breath entering the lungs and then passing all the way down the body, through the left leg, to the toes of the left foot. On the out-breath, feel or imagine the breath coming all the way back up from the toes and the foot, right up through the leg and torso and out through the nose. As best you can, continue breathing in this way for a few breaths, breathing down into the toes on each in-breath and back out from the toes on each out-breath. It may be difficult to get the hang of this – just practice this "breathing into" as best you can, approaching it playfully.

7. Now, when you are ready, on an out-breath, let go of the toes and bring your awareness to the sensations in the bottom of your left foot - bringing a gentle, investigative awareness to the sole of the foot, the instep, the heel (noticing, for example, the sensations where the heel makes contact with the mat or bed). Experiment with "breathing with" any and all sensations – being aware of the breath in the background, as, in the foreground, you explore the sensations in the bottom of the foot.

8. Now allow the awareness to expand into the rest of the foot – to the ankle, the top of the foot, right into the bones and joints. Then take a deeper and more intentional breath in, directing it down into the whole of the left foot completely, allowing the focus of awareness to move into the lower left leg – the calf, shin, knee and so forth, in turn.

9. Continue to scan the body, lingering for a time with each part of the body in turn: the left shin, the left knee, the left thigh; the right toes and then foot and ankle, the right lower leg, the right knee, the right thigh; the pelvic area – groin, genitals, buttocks, and hips; the lower back and the abdomen, the upper back and the chest and shoulders. Then we move to hands, usually doing both at the same time. We rest first with the sensations in the fingers and thumbs, the palms and the backs of both hands, the wrists, the lower arms and elbows; the upper arms; the shoulders again and the armpits; the neck; the face (jaw, mouth, lips, nose, cheeks, ears, eyes, forehead); and then the entirety of the head.

10. When you become aware of tension or of other intense sensations in a particular part of the body, you can "breathe in" to those sensations in the same way as you can to any others – using the in-breath to gently bring awareness right into the sensations, and, as best you can, have a sense of what happens in that region, if anything, as each breath lets go and releases on the out-breath.

11. The mind will inevitably wonder away from the breath and the body from time to time. That is entirely normal. It is what minds do.

When you notice it, gently acknowledge it, noticing where the mind has gone off to, and then gently return your attention to the part of the body you intended to focus on.

12. After you have scanned the whole body in this way, spend a few minutes being aware of a sense of the body as a whole and of the breath flowing freely in and out of the body.

13. It is also very important to remind yourself that if you, like most modern people, suffer from low-grade chronic sleep deprivation, since the body scan is done lying down, it is very easy to fall asleep. If you find yourself falling asleep, you might find it helpful to prop your head up with a pillow, open your eyes, or do the practice sitting up rather than lying down.

Take some time everyday to learn to steady your mind by attending to your breathing mindfully, and practice drawing your attention back to the present moment.

While the capacity to be mindful really comes into its own when we face some unique or challenging event in our unfolding everyday lives, doesn't it make sense to take some time out from our daily routine and find a moment where we can be quiet with our selves and come home to our inner capacity for stillness and clarity? There will always be thoughts and bodily sensations that emerge and cause us stress, but as we practice mindfulness, what begins to happen is that your capacity to note these and to attend to them, with kindness and appreciation, becomes steadier. And with that steadiness comes a deeper understanding and insight into those elements and experiences in our lives that keep repeating themselves over and over.

Understanding and insight free us from automatic patterns of reacting to our inner world by trying to avoid it, or becoming caught up in repeating past mistakes, and allows us to ground ourselves in the present and make some fresh choices about how we might wish to live our lives.

Mindfulness is not a stand-alone practice. It is one element, or one expression, of a general philosophy of what it takes to become a human being.

Mindfulness comes from spiritual traditions in the East and West that articulated a number of elements required for people to "grow up".

All of these philosophies recognized that it was easy for humans to get it wrong and find themselves confused and alienated from others.

Meditation emerged in each of these traditions as a way of deepening one's understanding of what it means to be human and progressing through different stages of psychological and spiritual growth.

Mindfulness practice does not require of you that you sign up to some particular religion or school of thought; but it works best when it's undertaken as part of an commitment to take more care of your self and to grow in your appreciation and respect for all living things.

Learn from the teachers

1. Teaching Assessment Criteria

The following is a series of excerpts from The Bangor, Exeter & Oxford Mindfulness-Based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC)

This guideline for assessing the competence and adherence of mindfulness-based class-based teaching, written by Rebecca S. Crane, Judith G. Soulsby, Willem Kuyken, J.Mark G.Williams, Catrin Eames And Trish Bartley, Cindy Cooper, Alison Evans, Melanie J.V.Fennell, Eluned Gold, Jody Mardula, Sarah Silverton, offers numerous valuable clues concerning important facets of mindfulness.

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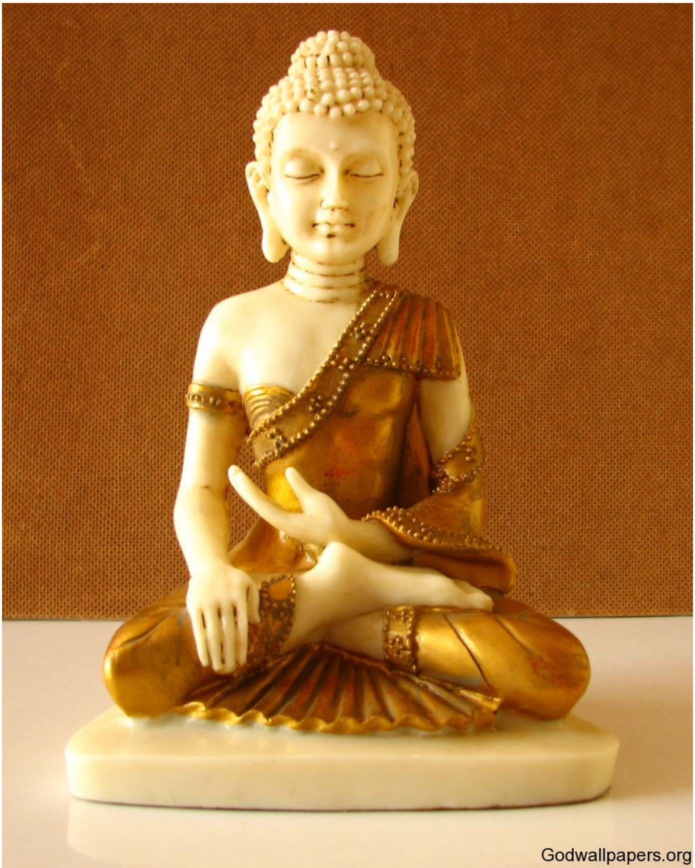
Domains of competence

There are 6 domains of competence within the MBI:TAC

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum
Domain 2: Relational skills
Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness
Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices
Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching
Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment

In developing the domains, it was clear that all the competences represented by each domain are absolutely crucial to the overall process - if any were not present, the teaching would have significant flaws and gaps. Moreover, the decision was made to give each domain equal priority in the profile and summary score.

Since what follows are excerpts only, they do not offer a full image of the competences required for good teaching of mindfulness. But then, that is not our aim here. Instead, what we want to do is highlight interesting facets of practising mindfulness:


Godwallpapers.org

Domain 1: Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum

Five key features need to be considered when assessing this domain:

(i) adherence to the form of the program and coverage of themes and curriculum content

(ii) responsiveness and flexibility in adhering to session curriculum

(iii)appropriateness of the themes and content (to stage of program and to the participants)

(iv) level of organisation of teacher, room and materials

(v) the degree to which the session flows and is appropriately paced

Mindfulness-based teaching requires that time is given to exploring important issues with sensitivity and simultaneously that time is used in an intentional and focused way. Effective coverage and pacing of the session curriculum offers an opportunity to embody the possibility of balancing working responsively with the present moment whilst holding an awareness of overarching intention. Skilful teaching therefore requires a dynamic balance between staying with the core intention for the session and responding to the spontaneity of the moment.

Generally, the teacher will have a session plan to work to with approximate times allotted to each part of the session curriculum. A key skill is to hold this plan flexibly and lightly, to enable appropriate responsiveness to the moment.

This is particularly emphasised in teaching MBSR, where content is transferable both between and within sessions. The main requirement is that the session themes are conveyed. A teacher may appropriately decide to drop a particular planned exercise should the material be naturally arising through other aspects.

It is important that the teacher conveys a strong sense of intention so that it is clear to the participants that the choice of focus for the time together is carefully planned and particular. Within this it is important to honour the contributions of participants. For example, at times it can be fruitful to use seemingly unproductive digressions to build cohesion in the group or to weave them in as examples of the kinds of mind patterns highlighted by mindfulness-based teaching processes (e.g. recognising rumination in action; seeing the pressure to have rationales for what we do and to search for outcomes).

Domain 2: Relational skills

Mindfulness-based teaching is highly relational – mindfulness practice engages us in a process of developing a new relationship both with ourselves and our experience. The qualities that the teacher brings to participants and the teaching process mirror the qualities that participants are learning to bring to themselves during the MBI program. Mindfulness is the awareness which emerges through paying attention to experience in a particular way: on purpose (the teacher is deliberate and focused when relating to participants in the sessions); in the present moment (the teacher has the intention to be whole heartedly present with participants); and non-judgmentally (the teacher brings a spirit of interest, deep respect and acceptance to participants) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Five key features need to be considered in assessing this domain:

(i) authenticity and potency – relating in a way which seems genuine, honest and confident

(ii) connection and acceptance – actively attending to and connecting with participants and their present moment experience and conveying back an accurate and empathic understanding of this

(iii)compassion and warmth – conveying a deep awareness, sensitivity, appreciation and openness to participants' experience

(iv) curiosity and respect - conveying genuine interest in each participant and his/her experience whilst respecting each participants' vulnerabilities, boundaries and need for privacy

(v) mutuality – engaging with the participants in a mutual collaborative working relationship

Domain 3: Embodiment of mindfulness

Mindfulness practice permeates the teacher and is expressed through two interconnected aspects to embodiment – ‘present moment focus’, and bringing the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness to moment by moment experience. Embodiment of mindfulness involves the teacher sustaining connection and responsiveness to moment by moment arising (within self, within individuals and within the group) and bringing the core attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice to all of this. These attitudes are non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Five key features need to be considered in assessing this domain:

(i) present moment focus - expressed through behaviour and verbal and non verbal communication

(ii) present moment responsiveness - to internal and external experience

(iii)calm & vitality - simultaneously conveying steadiness, ease, non-reactivity, and alertness

(iv) attitudinal foundations: - conveying mindfulness practice through the teacher’s way of being

(v) person of the teacher – the learning is conveyed through the teacher’s way of being

The teacher offers a demonstration of present moment focus so these are observable through the teacher’s behaviour and their verbal and non-verbal communication. The expression of embodiment can be particularly sensed through the teacher’s body – i.e. their posture, physical groundedness and steadiness, physical sense of ease, calm and alertness, steadiness, rhythm and pitch of voice tone, etc.

Formal mindfulness practices offer the opportunity to develop a finely tuned ability to 'read the internal weather' of one's being, which can then be brought to the experience of being in relation with another.

For the teacher, incorporating mindful awareness of their process while teaching offers a way to bring a present moment awareness of all of themselves (thoughts, emotions, sensations and actions) so that they become an embodied example of what is being taught. In particular this allows the possibility of attending closely to the ever shifting 'feeling tone' within the body and of using this invaluable source of information as a barometer to check in with and inform responses to participants. The teacher's present moment focus is grounded through their connection with this personal direct experience. Their responses to individuals, to the group and to the teaching process are informed and supported by this sense of connectedness to personal direct experience – allowing for truly authentic responsiveness.

In practice this process is evidenced by a relaxed calmness, together with alertness, aliveness and vitality shown though language, bodily expression and behaviour. The teacher's sensitivity to personal direct experience influences their choices within the group – e.g. through attuning to an individual during mindful dialogue; through the use of breathing spaces to open participants to difficulty arising within the group; through appropriate sharing of 'in the moment' personal direct experience. The teacher embodies a sense of 'surrender' to the moment and to what is needed now.

Through this 'way of being' there is a clear demonstration to the group of 'mindfulness in action' – a lived example of the essence of mindfulness practice and principles. The teacher operates predominantly in 'being' rather than 'doing' mode. The teacher is immersed in the process.

The teacher will use their attentional skills in both a wide and narrow angle way at different moments within the teaching – at times the teacher will guide the focus very clearly to one particular aspect of experience, and at others widen it, to encourage participants' minds to open to new learning and possibilities.

Mindfulness training develops the capacity to reside with a steady mind, which is simultaneously alert and vital. In this way there is a greater chance that the inevitable inner reactivity which emerges in the form of constellations of thoughts, emotions and body sensations are seen as they arise. A teacher who has this way of being built into him/her through a deep and sustained mindfulness practice will bring this spirit into the teaching process. Thus even within the sometimes charged and fluid atmosphere of a mindfulness-based class there is evidence of the teacher bringing steadiness and calm along with an enlivened vitality and alert responsiveness to the moment.

The attitudinal qualities that are inherent within the program (non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go) are taught through embodied process throughout the teaching of mindfulness-based courses, as well as sometimes being conveyed verbally through interactive teaching . Participants are learning to learn in new ways through the modelling offered by the teacher of this way of being with experience.

The attitudinal foundations (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, Ch.2) to mindfulness practice which are being conveyed in this process are laid out below:

- Non-judging – the teacher supports participants to open to an awareness of the stream of our inner and outer experience just as it is, without adding interpretation or judgement – but in a way which enables openness to seeing the internal process of automatically judging it and reacting to it. The teacher and participant are developing a stance of 'impartial witness' to experience. The teacher brings an intention not to judge their own personal or the participant’s expressed experience, but instead to cultivate an attitude of friendly interest to it.

- Patience – the teaching process simply works with experience as it is right now and allows an understanding that things can only emerge in their own time.

- Beginner’s mind – the teacher communicates a willingness to ‘suspend’ judgement and approaches experience with a fresh interest and curiosity. So that rather than seeing things through a fog of preconceptions there is the possibility of bringing clarity and vitality to experience. The teacher supports participants to develop a perspective on our experience that is not based on our history.

- Trust – conveying ‘in the moment’ (rather than focused on outcome) trust and confidence in the process of bringing mindful attention to experience. The teacher communicates a faith in the validity of thoughts, emotions, sensations and the perceptions/intuitions arising out of connection with these. The teacher conveys a sense of trust in the participants’ expertise in relation to their own experience. The practice followed by inquiry offers a structure and a process for enabling us to witness personal experience and an encouragement to rely on the validity of this evidence.

- Non-striving – the teacher embodies an attitude of willingness to allow the present to be the way it is and for each participant to be the way they are. The process is explicitly not trying to fix problems or attain any goal, but rather is intending to uncover an awareness of the actuality of experience, and a willingness to let it be the way it is. The process of mindfulness offers us all the opportunity to step aside from our usual process of endeavouring to ‘improve ourselves’ and ‘trying’ to reach a new place. The paradox of the learning process is that although there are clear reasons for us all being engaged in an exploration of how we deal with the pain of our lives, there is nothing to be achieved here that is not already present in this moment. This is conveyed through the teacher's capacity to honour and inhabit the process of unfolding within the class without moving towards premature explanation or synthesis; or moving into a mode of problem solving or conceptualising.

- Acceptance – the teacher embodies a willingness to see things as they actually are in the present moment, and offers a way of opening to and being with the reality of things without struggling to change them. The teacher models accepting self, others and experience with an attitude of friendliness.

- Letting go – the inquiry process nurtures the development of an ability to stay present and acknowledge the arising and passing of experience such as thoughts and emotions without becoming entangled in the content of it. The mindfulness-based teaching process puts a particular emphasis on coming to know our conditioned tendency hold onto the pleasant, ignore the neutral, and reject the unpleasant, and to see the ways in which this perpetuates our difficulties. The teacher works with letting go of expectations and of needing to guide the process towards a particular outcome, having no agenda other than exploring and understanding the actuality of participants' experience in each moment

In addition to these qualities, Kabat-Zinn (1990) also describes the energy and motivation that is brought to mindfulness practice as 'commitment, self discipline and intentionality' – the development of perseverance and resolve to stay with the process of investigation of personal experience.

Intentionality is a key area that the teacher is embodying within the teaching process.

Intentionality: In order to set the stage for this particular form of experiential learning, a certain sort of intention and purpose needs to be cultivated.

The teacher conveys this through seamless cultivation of mindful awareness within the session. The combination of working in non-striving ways whilst also being focused, clear and directional forms a paradox which is central and inherent to skilful teaching.

The practice of mindfulness therefore encourages us to pay attention to the intention and motivation that we bring to both formal and informal practice, in the class and at home. The teacher is helping participants relate the practice to a 'personally valued vision' (Segal et al., 2002, p.92). This is quite subtle and is conveyed through careful use of language (e.g. the phrase 'try to keep your attention on your breath' has quite a different effect from 'as best you can returning the attention to the breath each time it slips away'); and through the teacher giving expression to the qualities of 'non-striving' alongside 'firm intention' in their entire way of being during the teaching (Crane, 2009).

Domain 4: Guiding mindfulness practices

Overview: The teacher offers guidance that describes accurately what the participant is being invited to do in the practice, and includes all the elements required in that practice. The guidance enables participants to relate skilfully to mind wandering (seeing this as a natural mind process, working gently but firmly to cultivate the skill to recognise when the mind has wandered and to bring the attention back). The guidance suggests the attitudes to bring to self and experience throughout the practice. The practice balances spaciousness with precision. Skilful use of language is key to conveying all this.

N.B. – Embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to practise guidance, and should be assessed under Domain 3

Three key features need to be considered in assessing this domain:

(i) language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible whilst conveying spaciousness

(ii) the teacher guides the practice in a way which makes the key learning for each practice available to participants

(iii) the particular elements to consider when guiding each practice are appropriately present

Mindfulness practice guiding offers an opportunity to integrate teaching on the cultivation of mindfulness, and space for participants to experience and experiment with the process for themselves. Given the subtlety of the messages being conveyed and the paradox inherent within these, great delicateness and sensitivity is needed when guiding. The teacher should demonstrate familiarity with the key intentions of mindfulness practice generally and also the specific intentions of each practice

All practices need to incorporate 3 layers of guidance:

1. Instructions on where to place attention (described below in relation to each practice)

This needs to be integrated and interspersed with guidance on:

2. Working with mind wandering

3. The attitudes to cultivate while doing the practice

Guidance for feature:

(i) language is clear, precise, accurate and accessible whilst conveying spaciousness

Guidance on where to place attention

Requirement for accuracy and precision – i.e. clear articulation of what the participant is specifically being invited to do.

Offering guidance on working with mind wandering:

- Being clear that mind wandering is part of the process; i.e. our intention is not to keep the attention one pointedly on for example the breath but to become aware of the activities of our mind as we repeatedly invite the attention back to one particular place. So our 'job' is not to stop the mind wandering but to work in a particular way when we become aware that it has wandered. This way is to:
    - o acknowledge that the attention has wandered (some teachers suggest noting where the attention has gone before returning)
    - o bring attention back to the object of awareness with an emphasis on kindness and gentleness but also with firmness.
    - o do this again and again with acceptance and without judgement

- Offering spaces of silence for participants to practise independently with periodical reminders; the length of silence can increase with the experience of the group

Offering guidance on the attitudinal qualities to cultivate:

Be attentive to the presence/absence within practice guidance of:

- Guidance on the spirit to bring to the practice. Inviting gentleness, lightness of touch, curiosity about the experiences unfolding; balancing gentleness with a firmness of intention; taking care of self; letting go of judgement and self-criticism.
- Encouraging non-striving by reminding participants about letting go of needing / wanting to 'do' anything. E.g. "allowing experience to be as it is"; "seeing if the breath breathes itself and simply bringing awareness to the experience of this".
- Avoiding language which might feed into a sense of striving – words such as 'trying', 'working', 'seeing if you can…' can be unhelpful.
- Spaciousness – balancing silence with guidance, and using language economically.
- Using present participles (attending, bringing awareness' etc.) to convey a feeling of guiding/inviting rather than ordering, to reduce resistance.
- Sometimes using 'the' rather than 'your' – e.g. 'the breath' – to encourage participants to be less identified with the body.

Guidance for feature:

(ii) the teacher guides the practice in a way which makes the key learning for each practice available to participants

Raisin practice

Key learning (feature ii):

Experiencing the difference between mindful awareness and automatic pilot Experiencing how bringing attention to experience can reveal new aspects to it and can transform our experience of it The present is the only time we have to know anything Experiencing how the mind wanders

The Raisin Mindfulness Exercise

Pick up a raisin and hold it in the palm of your hand. Look at it. Examine it. Describe the raisin. What does it look like? What colour is it? How would you describe the texture? Now, feel the raisin in the palm of your hand. What does it feel like against your skin? Pick it up with your other hand. What does it feel like in your fingers? Is it slimy? Rough? Smooth? Soft? Hard? Squeeze it softly. What do you feel? Smell the raisin. Describe how it smells. Put the raisin in your mouth, but do not eat it. What does it feel like on your tongue? What does the texture feel like now? How does it taste? How does the taste compare to the way it smelled? Move it around in your mouth and notice every aspect of the raisin. Bite the raisin and think about what you taste. Now how does the raisin feel in your mouth? Finish chewing and eat the raisin. How did it taste? Describe the experience of the raisin.

This exercise is about cultivating awareness and beginning to learn to focus on the here-and-now. It is about being in the present moment and not missing out on it. Sometimes, much of our anxiety or fear is a result of focusing our thoughts on the future - or the past - and forgetting to be present here in this moment. Right here, in this very moment, those things may not need or deserve our attention.

This exercise (or a variation of it) can be done with just about anything. Try a pretzel or a piece of fruit. It can also be done with just about any activity. What would it be like to notice every detail of something that we normally do automatically and without much thought? What would it be like to notice every aspect of brushing your teeth or putting on your shoes? Break the activity down into its most fundamental elements. Be right there in the moment. Notice everything. Be nowhere else. Don't miss right now.

Exercise text provided by James Sillcox, sillcox(at)gmail.com
Read more: http://www.mindfulnessinfo.com/exercise-2-the-raisin/

Elements to consider in guiding (feature iii):

- Hygiene considerations – using a spoon, clean bowl, pouring out raisins in front of participants, kitchen paper to hand, may suggest in orientation that participants wash hands for eating meditation before class.
- Offering option not to eat raisin – explore with other senses. Choosing to offer participants just one raisin – or two or three.
- Potential to guide the first one interactively as a group – inviting them to call out 'feeling' words which can give the flavour of what is being asked for here; the next one you can ask them to eat it in silence with you guiding and the next one in silence completely with no guidance (if only one, ask them to eat in silence with you guiding). Inviting letting go of knowing that this is a raisin and to see it 'fresh' as a child first encounters experience. Consider emphasising the attitudes of curiosity, interest, exploration.

In the inquiry there are several areas that are useful to explore with participants:

- Lots of direct noticing of the sensations of the experience from all senses
- Elicit observations about how it might have felt different from their usual experience of eating a raisin
- Help the group to gather the observations about the nature of our minds, the ways we generally pay attention and how this relates to

our well-being; in particular the following themes may emerge in the group dialogue:

(a) if we are on autopilot, we cannot see our moods begin to change or go down, or notice stress rising

(b) the raisin practice can help us realise that there are other things to be seen, that there is more to life than our preconceptions, deductions, opinions and theories; slowing down even the most routine activities might transform them; paying attention to our experience in this 'curious', open way may show us aspects of our experience that we had not seen before; the experience itself is different

(c) the mind is always making associations from present-moment experience to memories, deeper level understanding, stories, etc. but we are not usually aware of where it is taking us; mostly we do not choose where our mind goes; we see how difficult mind states might easily take hold when we are unawares, because analysing the past and worrying about the future can be 'second nature' to us

(d) the difference between eating this way and usual attitudes to eating; impulses around food are often unconscious, powerful and uncontrolled

Body Scan

Key learning (feature ii):

Direct experiential knowing of physical sensations Learning to be intentional about how we pay attention Relating skilfully to the mind wandering when it occurs (acknowledging and bringing back) and to difficulties + guidance about how to handle difficulties (sleepiness, discomfort, etc.) Guidance on allowing things to be as they are – no goals to be achieved, no special state, no right way for the body to feel Guidance to direct breath through/to different parts of the body + taking attention to experience of this Guidance on beginning to notice and relate differently to our sensations and mental states, including boredom, irritation, impulses, etc.

The Body Scan Mindfulness Exercise

1. Sit in a chair as for the breath awareness or lie down, making yourself comfortable, lying on your back on a mat or rug on the floor or on your bed. Choose a place where you will be warm and undisturbed. Allow your eyes to close gently.

2. Take a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations in the body When you are ready, bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body, especially to the sensations of touch or pressure, where your body makes contact with the chair or bed. On each out breath, allow yourself to let go, to sink a little deeper into the chair or bed.

3. Remind yourself of the intention of this practice. Its aim is not to feel any different, relaxed, or calm; this may happen or it may not. Instead, the intention of the practice is, as best you can, to bring awareness to any sensations you detect, as you focus your attention on each part of the body in turn.

4. Now bring your awareness to the physical sensations in the lower abdomen, becoming aware of the changing patterns of sensations in

the abdominal wall as you breathe in, and as you breathe out. Take a few minutes to feel the sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out.

5. Having connected with the sensations in the abdomen, bring the focus or "spotlight" of your awareness down the left leg, into the left foot, and out to the toes of the left foot. Focus on each of the toes of the left foot in turn, bringing a gentle curiosity to investigate the quality of the sensations you find, perhaps noticing the sense of contact between the toes, a sense of tingling, warmth, or no particular sensation.

6. When you are ready, on an in-breath, feel or imagine the breath entering the lungs, and then passing down into the abdomen, into the left leg, the left foot, and out to the toes of the left foot. Then, on the out-breath, feel or imagine the breath coming all the way back up, out of the foot, into the leg, up through the abdomen, chest, and out through the nose. As best you can, continue this for a few breaths, breathing down into the toes, and back out from the toes. It may be difficult to get the hang of this just practice this "breathing into" as best you can, approaching it playfully.

7. Now, when you are ready, on an out-breath, let go of awareness of the toes, and bring your awareness to the sensations on the bottom of your left foot—bringing a gentle, investigative awareness to the sole of the foot, the instep, the heel (e.g., noticing the sensations where the heel makes contact with the mat or bed). Experiment with "breathing with" the sensations—being aware of the breath in the background, as, in the foreground, you explore the sensations of the lower foot.

8. Now allow the awareness to expand into the rest of the foot—to the ankle, the top of the foot, and right into the bones and joints. Then, taking a slightly deeper breath, directing it down into the whole of the left foot, and, as the breath lets go on the out-breath, let go of

the left foot completely, allowing the focus of awareness to move into the lower left leg—the calf, shin, knee, and so on, in turn.

9. Continue to bring awareness, and a gentle curiosity, to the physical sensations in each part of the rest of the body in turn - to the upper left leg, the right toes, right foot, right leg, pelvic area, back, abdomen, chest, fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, head, and face. In each area, as best you can, bring the same detailed level of awareness and gentle curiosity to the bodily sensations present. As you leave each major area, "breathe in" to it on the in-breath, and let go of that region on the out-breath.

10. When you become aware of tension, or of other intense sensations in a particular part of the body, you can "breathe in" to them—using the in-breath gently to bring awareness right into the sensations, and, as best you can, have a sense of their letting go, or releasing, on the out-breath.

11. The mind will inevitably wander away from the breath and the body from time to time. That is entirely normal. It is what minds do. When you notice it, gently acknowledge it, noticing where the mind has gone off to, and then gently return your attention to the part of the body you intended to focus on.

12. After you have "scanned" the whole body in this way, spend a few minutes being aware of a sense of the body as a whole, and of the breath flowing freely in and out of the body.

13. If you find yourself falling asleep, you might find it helpful to prop your head up with a pillow, open your eyes, or do the practice sitting up rather than lying down.

14. You can adjust the time spent in this practice by using larger chunks of your body to become aware of or spending a shorter or longer time with each part.

Elements to consider in guiding (feature iii):

- Start and end by bringing attention to the whole body
- Pay particular attention to detail of body sensations; give examples of words describing sensations – warm, cold, tingling, numbness, etc.
- Give participants the option to come back to the breath at any time to stabilise their attention – remind them of this during the practice Allow the absence of feeling particular or any sensations to be just as important as their presence Instruct to let go of the last body region before moving awareness to the next
- Be aware of exactly where and how teacher is asking participants to place their attention
- Vary instructions between both narrow angle, detailed awareness of a small part of the body, and wide angle awareness of a larger area of the body such as the trunk, or the whole body periodically through the practice offer guidance on dealing with distraction
- Offer guidance which invites participants to move into a direct 'being with' body sensations rather than looking at them from a distance Skilful guidance of awareness of breath within the body scan
- Balance guidance which gives the flavour of being with, allowing, and accepting alongside that giving a flavour of exploration, curiosity, aliveness, adventure.

Sitting meditation

Key learning (feature ii):

- Anchoring to present moment through body sensations
- Dealing skilfully with mind-wandering
- Learning gentleness, encouraging curiosity, learning acceptance
- Mindfulness of 'feel of things' (pleasant/unpleasant/neutral)
- Noticing aversion
- Learning to consciously widen and narrow the focus of attention
- Mindfulness of the natural flux of experience
- Cultivating being fully with experience AND having an observer stance simultaneously
- Learning to receive experience as it is, as distinct from mental labels, stories about it, etc.
- Learning to see recurring patterns in the mind and how they develop, play out, etc.
- Seeing more deeply into the nature of human experience

The Sitting Meditation Mindfulness Exercise

1. When you take your position take a moment to settle into your body and become centred before you bring your attention to the sensations and movement of breath through your body. The mind may wander frequently during mindfulness meditation and you can gently redirect your attention back to your breathing. Focus on your breath for several minutes before moving on.

2. Shift your attention to your bodily sensations. Take note of the contact your body has with the chair or floor and the sensations associated with this. Notice the sensations in your body without judgment, just accept them and reflect on them with curiosity and interest, even if it is unpleasant.

3. Bring awareness to any urges you may have to relieve discomfort, such as moving your body or scratching an itch. Do not act on these urges right away, instead just observe the discomfort with acceptance. If you decide to move then do it mindfully, by observing the intention to move and the change in sensation as a result of moving.

4. You may bring awareness to your environment and listen mindfully to the sounds around you. This is a part of mindfulness meditation techniques. Notice the volume, tone and duration of the sounds without analyzing or judging them. Observe the periods of silence between the sounds also and then redirect your focus to your breathing.

Important points to remember when doing a sitting mindfulness meditation:

- It is okay if thoughts come into your awareness as this is normal activity for the mind. Observe the thought content briefly without becoming absorbed and then gently return to the breath. You may do this many times over, but what is important is that you observe and accept the thoughts and then return your attention to your breath.

- Similarly, with emotions that come to the forefront, just observe the type of emotion you are experiencing (such as sadness, anger, boredom) and then redirect your focus to your breathing.

- Sitting mindfulness meditation is most beneficial when it is incorporated into a daily routine for a period of 10-45 minutes.

Source of sitting meditation exercise text:
http://www.mindfulnessmeditation.org/2012/03/09/how-to-do-mindfulness-meditation-sitting/

Sitting meditation – elements to consider in guiding (feature iii):

Posture

Giving practical information on helpful posture using e.g. chair, stool, cushion. Supporting the transition from 'doing' into 'being' mode of mind: a clear focus on posture at the beginning of the practice helps to establish the intention of the practice and to facilitate the transition into this period of deliberate cultivation of 'being mind'.

Breath

- Anchoring in the present moment: reconnecting with a specific aspect of experience in the here and now
- Guidance on where in the body to pay attention to breath sensations
- Avoidance of language that encourages thinking about the breath rather than being directly in connection with it

Body sensations

- Transition from breath - expand the attention around the sensations of breathing to an awareness of sensations in the body as a whole
- Offering explicit guidance about how to place attention
- Offering clear guidance here on options for working with discomfort / pain / intensity whether it is of a physical or emotional origin

Sounds

- Receiving the sounds as they come and go; listening to sounds as sounds – noticing loudness, tone, length, etc.; seeing sounds as events in the mind; noticing layers of meaning added to the direct experience of sounds

Thoughts and emotions

- Relating to thoughts similarly to how we relate to sounds – seeing their arising and passing away
- Seeing recurring patterns and how these develop and play out within the mind
- Using metaphors to help point towards what is being invited here
- Acknowledging the challenge
- Use the breath as an anchor when the mind becomes unsettled
- Expanding the attention to include emotions, naming these, seeing how they play out in body sensations
- Mindfulness of the full range of experience – choiceless awareness
- Being with and bringing an open attention to whatever is arising in each moment – the breath, body, thoughts, sounds, emotions etc.
- Noticing recurring patterns in the body and mind
- Coming back to the breath as an anchor as often as is needed.

The three step breathing space (3MBS)

Key learning (feature ii):

The learning is encapsulated within the three steps to the practice. Each step needs to be clearly conveyed. Preparing by stepping out of automatic pilot, then three steps:

1. Awareness – Recognising and acknowledging all of one's current experience (thoughts, emotions, sensations).
2. Gathering – bringing the attention to the sensations of the breath in a particular place in the body.
3. Expanding the awareness into the body as a whole using the particular sensations of the breath as an anchor, while opening to the range of experience being perceived.

The Three Step Breathing Space Mindfulness Exercise

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http://londoncognitive.com/2012/03/13/brief-mindfulness-meditation-strategies/

(Excerpt from Teach Yourself Resilience by D. Robertson)

"Mini-meditation" techniques such as the "Three-Minute Breathing Space" (3MBS) in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) are employed to provide an opportunity for rapid-frequent practice throughout the day and in a variety of settings. We can think of this as injecting a short burst of more profound mindfulness in-between ordinary daily activities. In MBCT the aim is to do this at least three times per day, at prescribed times, or as an acceptance-based strategy when unpleasant experiences arise. However, you might choose to do it more often, perhaps even for a few minutes during every waking hour, for a couple of weeks. It's natural to think of the shift in focus of attention involved as narrowing briefly on to some anchoring point or "centring device" such as the breath and then widening to the present moment and the task at hand, as a way of concluding the exercise and continuing, mindfully, with daily activity.

The following brief exercise incorporates elements from several mindfulness and acceptance-based therapies:

1. Begin by stopping whatever you were doing, stepping out of "autopilot", and becoming aware of what you're experiencing in the present moment, particularly any unpleasant thoughts or feelings you may have the urge to struggle with or avoid

2. Gather or focus your attention on the sensations of your breathing, in the present moment, as you've done in longer mindfulness meditation exercises, while also willingly accepting any unpleasant feelings, by imagining your breath flowing through them, creating a sense of space around them and observing their properties in a detached way

3. Conclude by expanding your awareness gradually, throughout your body as a whole, and finally back to your environment and any tasks at hand, in the present moment, before slowly and mindfully resuming any activities you're engaged in

If it helps, give yourself verbal instructions like, "Even though I don't like these feelings I'm going to actively accept them and observe what happens…" or "Let go of the struggle and accept…" You may also find it helpful to repeat a short word of your choosing (e.g., "one"), in your mind, each time you exhale. This can serve the dual purpose of acting as a "centring device" for your attention while also functioning as a cue-word to help you rapidly recall the state of mindfulness from previous exercises.

You can practice this briefly, for about ten seconds, or turn it into a longer meditation, perhaps lasting 10-20 minutes, if necessary.

Remember, your aim isn't to get rid of the unpleasant experiences but rather to let go of the struggle and willingly accept them instead. However, people often do find, as a kind of side-effect, that unpleasant experiences may reduce as a result of acceptance strategies like this.

Brief Mindfulness Script

Step One: Mindfulness of the Here and Now

Pause for a few moments to become more mindful of yourself. Notice how you're currently using your body and your mind, right now, in the present moment. Take a step back from your thoughts and allow yourself to acknowledge and accept any unpleasant feelings you might be having, such as tension, pain, or anxiety. Be aware of yourself as the detached observer of your thoughts and feelings. Throughout life you've experienced literally millions of different thoughts and feelings and observed many different things. Your current thoughts and feelings are transient, just what you happen to be experiencing right now, sooner or later your attention will move on to other things, and then sometimes it may return to these experiences again.

For now, just be aware of what you're currently experiencing, from moment to moment, without evaluating it, analysing it, or interpreting it. You can have your eyes open or closed, be standing or sitting, it really doesn't matter. Just allow yourself to pause and become mindful of your experience for a few moments. If your mind wanders, that's fine, just acknowledge the fact and bring your awareness patiently back to the exercise you're doing.

Step Two: Grounding Attention in the Breathing

Now gradually narrow your focus of attention on to the sensations of your breathing. Don't try to change your breathing, don't try to stop it from changing, just breathe naturally. Accept what your breathing feels like and make room for it to do whatever it wants, let go of any desire to change or control it. Notice the sensations of your breathing, the rise and fall of your belly, perhaps movements in your chest, or even your shoulders. Become aware of even the smallest sensations that accompany your breathing, feelings you may not have noticed before. Keep paying attention to your breathing to help ground your attention in the reality of the present moment.

If you're aware of any unpleasant feelings anywhere in your body, just allow yourself to accept them patiently and let them come and go as they please, or to remain the same. Let go completely of any struggle against them and instead study them from a more detached perspective. Combine awareness of the breath with awareness of the body by imagining your breath continually passing right through that part of your body where the unpleasant feelings are happening. Use your breath to centre your attention on that part of your body for a while. As you breathe in and out, continue to actively accept those sensations and allow yourself to fully experience them. Let go completely of any struggle against them. Make room for the feelings to run their course, or come and go freely by imagining a sense of space opening up around them. You are not your breath, you are not those sensations, you are not your emotions or even your thoughts; you're the detached observer of all of these things, viewing experiences from a distance as they come and go without struggle.

Step Three: Expanding Awareness throughout the Body

Now gradually begin to expand your awareness beyond those sensations. Continue to be aware of your breathing and any part of your body that you've been attending to but, in addition, allow your awareness to begin spreading through the rest of your body, throughout the trunk of your body, your arms, your legs, your neck and head. Become aware of your whole body as one, and continue to accept any unpleasant sensations you're experiencing but also begin to notice what else you're experiencing, more and more, progressively widening the sphere of your attention. Not trying to avoid or control unpleasant experiences but rather expanding beyond them.

Now gradually spread your awareness out further beyond your body and into the room around you, where you are and what you're doing right now. Continue to notice how you're using your body and mind as you look slowly around you. As you finish the exercise and begin interacting with the external world and perhaps other people, take that sense of mindfulness and self-awareness with you into your environment and any tasks at hand. If you continue to notice any unpleasant sensations, that's fine, just accept them, let go of any struggle against them, and gently expand your attention beyond them to the world around you and the way you're interacting with life as you move into action.

Elements to consider in guiding (feature iii):

- Guidance on posture – communicate the effect of coming to an upright and dignified posture. If this is not possible (in using the additional 3MBS in difficult situations, for example) then inviting participants to make a first move of becoming aware of their posture is helpful.
- Precision in communicating the 3 steps of the practice during guidance – the instructions need to be carefully targeted towards what is intended.
- Including instructions on mind wandering and working with this.
- Helping participants recognise and practise the three steps of the 3MBS.

N.B. – the 3MBS and other practices need to be accompanied by a teaching process which supports participants in practising at home and integrating the process into their everyday lives. This aspect of the teaching is rated in Domain 5 Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching

Examples of how this needs to be attended to in relation to the 3MBS are cited below:

- Preparing participants to integrate this into their day – encourage participants to anchor the practice to a specific activity in their day
- It is useful to guide the practice and then afterwards to explain about the three parts – perhaps using the flip chart
- Encouraging participants to use the 3MBS as a natural first step – whenever things feel difficult or there is confusion; using the 3MBS during class when strong emotions have been explored, or there is another need to re-ground in present moment experience, can be a good reminder of this
- Clarity in developing the application of the 3MBS through the 8 weeks

Mindful movement

Key learning (feature ii):

Building on the foundation of the body scan in learning how we can bring awareness to and inhabit bodily experience/sensation Experiencing awareness of the body in motion, as it often is in life Relating to the body with friendliness; for some increasing enjoyment of the body's capacities Movements and postures offer an embodiment of life experiences and processes Seeing habitual tendencies played out Working with physical boundaries/intensity offers a parallel to working in similar ways with emotional experience; experiencing that physical movement can change emotional experience Learning and experiencing working with present moment acceptance, including of our physical limitations, and learning to relate in new ways to pain Learning new ways of taking care of ourselves

Mindful Movement Exercises

When practicing Mindful Movement, you tune into your body, into sensations and movements which you normally tune out because they are so familiar, and get in touch with how wonderful it is to have your body, no matter what it looks or feels like.

One form of Mindful Movement is gentle stretching and strengthening exercise.

This is done very slowly, without striving to change yourself, and without forcing yourself to do more than your body can safely achieve. In this exercise you practice accepting your body as you find it, from one moment to the next, as you stretch, or lift parts of the body, or balance.

This is very different to most exercise classes, which focus only on what the body is doing. In such body-oriented exercise there tends to be little explicit care given to what is going on in the mind, and how the body and mind affect each other.

Another form of Mindful Movement is Mindful Walking. This involves focusing on the sensations in your feet, or your legs, or maybe feeling your whole body moving. You can notice the tiny movements in the muscles in your feet as they adjust to keep you balanced. You slowly lift one foot off the floor, gently swing it forward, then lower it again, all in slow motion.

Because we tend to live life so unconsciously, we take things like the ability to walk for granted. When you pay attention to it, you will appreciate that it is an amazing balancing act, given the small surface area of the feet. This is the essence of Mindful Movement: learning to notice, appreciate, and enjoy the wonder of the body you have.

Some fun ways that you can help your children to connect mindfully with their body include:

- Practice Mindful Walking with your kids
- Stop & ask them what they noticed in their body when they walked really slowly, & what feelings & thoughts they noticed
- Then walk faster
- Stop & ask them what they noticed in their body this time. Did they notice feelings & thoughts as they walked quickly? Were they different this time?
- Do Mindful Walking again
- Again ask what they noticed in their body when they walked really slowly, & what feelings & thoughts they noticed

There is much to appreciate and enjoy in your body when you meet it mindfully.

Mindful Movement Exercises Text provided by Kara Matheson
http://www.getaheadkids.com.au/Features/2012/20/Mindful%20Movement.html

Elements to consider in guiding (feature iii):

1. Ensuring that participants engage in the practices in ways that are safe and respectful to their body is a major consideration in guiding movement practices

i. Giving clear and precise guidance on ways of working with physical boundaries at the beginning of the practice

ii. Interspersing the practice with reminders about working within safe limits for your body in this moment

iii. Offering guidance in particular on:
  a. Potential adaptations for postures as they are taught
  b. Reminders to hold postures for the amount of time that is right for each participant regardless of how long the teacher or others hold a posture
  c. Reminders that it is OK not to do a posture and either to do something different, or to sit/lie and possibly to visualise the body doing the posture

iv. Always encouraging participants to err on the side of caution

v. Always encouraging participants to listen to the wisdom of their own body and allow this to override any guidance you may be giving

vi. Reminding participants not to be competitive with themselves or others

2. Breath guidance: Helpful guidance regarding the breath includes:

i. Generally, guiding participants to breathe in as they form the intention to move and then to move with the out breath

ii. Encouraging participants to breath fully and freely in whatever way feels most natural as they move

iii. Guidance on relaxing into postures and breathing with or into regions of greatest intensity

3. Ensuring that guidance is given in ways which invite detailed awareness of moment by moment experience

i. Giving plenty of space within the practice:
a. Dwelling in the postures long enough to let go into them
b. Resting between postures to enable the effects of the movement to be sensed

ii. Encouraging participants to explore and discover the creative edge between exploring / investigating / discovering, and accepting / letting be / being with

CLEAN YOUR BEACH

Domain 5: Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching

Overview: This domain assesses the process through which the course themes are conveyed to participants. These are at times explicitly drawn out and underlined by the teacher and at other times emerge implicitly within the process. The domain includes inquiry, group dialogue, use of stories and poems, facilitating group exercises, orienting participants to session/course themes, and didactic teaching.

Five key features need to be considered in assessing this domain:

(i) experiential focus – supporting participants to notice and describe the different elements of direct experience and their interaction with each other; teaching themes are consistently linked to this direct experience

(ii) moving around the layers within the inquiry process (direct experience, reflection on direct experience, and linking both to wider learning) with a predominant focus on process rather than content

(iii) conveying learning – through integrating material from outside the group with experience of participants

(iv) teaching skills – the learning is communicated through clear, participatory, playful, alive, responsive teaching process

(v) fluency – teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of the material

N.B. – Course themes are conveyed through all elements of the course; this domain only covers the teacher's skill during the inquiry process, didactic teaching and facilitation of group exercises (not leading mindfulness practices)

– This domain assesses the process through which the teacher conveys the teaching themes – the presence of the themes themselves is rated in Domain 1 Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum

– Embodiment of mindfulness is a crucial underpinning to interactive teaching and should be assessed under Domain 3 Embodiment of mindfulness

A large part of each session is taken up by interactive teaching processes – reviewing the experience of mindfulness practices during the session and at home (inquiry), drawing out experience during and after group exercises, and offering didactic teaching in an interactive and participatory manner. This exploratory way of approaching experience illuminates the habitual tendencies and patterns of the human mind and offers an embodiment of a potential way of being and working with experience beyond the program. The teacher demonstrates skilful and creative use of a range of different methods of teaching, including the use of metaphor, poems and stories. Participants' difficulties (e.g., avoidance, distress, emotional reactivity) in sessions are crucial opportunities to convey course themes, and the way the teacher works in these moments should be given weight in assessing overall, and in this domain in particular.

(i) experiential focus – supporting participants to notice and describe the different elements of direct experience and their interaction with each other; teaching themes are consistently linked to this direct experience

The teaching process is predominantly based on an experiential focus and supports participants in reconnecting with their direct experience (with a particular emphasis on sensations in the body) and uses this experiential 'data' as a starting point for exploration and learning. When the dialogue moves into conceptualisations, the teacher quickly leads the participants back towards connection with immediate experience. Participants are given opportunities to become aware of and discriminate the different elements of direct experience – sensations, thoughts, feelings – both retrospectively tracking these as they arose in a mindfulness practice and tracking them now as they arise in the moment.

Style of questioning/dialoguing in mindfulness-based teaching includes:

- Use of open questions, rather than closed questions which only require a "yes" or "no" answer
- Questions/statements that open space – "would you be willing to tell me more?"; 'hows?' and 'whats?' rather than 'whys?'
- Avoiding questions/statements that close/fill the space – e.g. yes/no, fixing/solutions, self stories
- Attentive and positive non-verbals
- Alternating questions and statements
- Opening the space – creating and recognising possibilities
- Sensing when inquiry is appropriate in group discussions – sometimes a question needs an answer, sometimes inquiry, sometimes nothing but 'thank you' or a smile
- Humility – the other person is the expert in their own experience (Blacker, Stahl & Meleo-Meyer, 2006)

(ii) exploring the different layers within the inquiry process (direct experience, reflection on direct experience, and linking both to wider learning) with a predominant focus on process rather than content

How much time is allowed for the actuality of experience and relationship with experience to be explored before introducing broader teaching themes?

One can think of the dialogue as having three concentric circles and layers of inquiry (see Figure):

1. Layer 1 – noticing sensations, thoughts, feelings (direct experience within self)

Areas of exploration/questioning include:

- What did you notice? (e.g. physical sensations, including sounds, feelings, colours, textures, movement)
- How did it feel?
- Where were these occurring – specific location or through the whole body?
- Did the sensations change or were they constant?
- Emotions/feelings, and thoughts connected to them
- Thoughts about now, the past, the future?
- When your mind wandered where did it go?
- Thoughts? – Memories, worries, planning, time, food?
- Sensations? – Restlessness, pain, hot/cold, heavy/light
- Emotions? – Sad, angry, fearful, happy, secure, loving

2. Layer 2 – dialoguing about them (placing the direct noticing in a personal context of understanding) e.g.:

- How did you feel when your mind wandered?
- What did you do when your mind wandered (let it wander, get involved in the thoughts, bring it back – with gentleness, firmness, guilt, annoyance, amusement, judgement, etc.)
- Explore the sensations of reactions/responses – what were the sensations of e.g. gentleness, guilt, pushing away, holding on, tuning out, opening to, etc?
- How did bringing awareness to this experience affect it?
- Is this pattern of experience that you describe familiar? – in what ways?

3. Layer 3 – linking them to the aims of the program (placing the learning in layers 1 and 2 in a wider context of understanding)

Within MBSR this linkage process is in relation to the broad application of mindfulness skills to the areas of living life, managing stress, communicating, making choices about self care, and so on. The encouragement is for participants themselves to come naturally to a process of making the links by applying the learning from the program to their lives; this is done through integrating the mindfulness-based learning material offered in the program into their daily lives. This is true also in MBCT, but there is a greater emphasis within the linkage process on connecting direct experience and learning with an understanding of the particular vulnerability which the program is adapted for – e.g. relapse prevention in depression, chronic fatigue etc. This process is held mainly by the teacher who supports participants in integrating their direct experience with contextual understanding about the particular challenge they are working with.

So linkage is helping participants to illuminate their seeing of:

- The ways in which their mind becomes 'caught' or stuck through their particular way of relating to experience
- The ways in which their learning about mindfulness has relevance within the various spheres of their life
- The ways in which their learning about mindfulness has relevance to the particular vulnerability that they are working with (e.g. susceptibility to depression, chronic fatigue etc.) (see Chapter 12, Inquiry, in Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2012 on how to do this while staying close to participants' direct experience).

In any inquiry process it is important that the teacher takes time with each 'circle', and if the group rushes to discuss or 'talk about', to allow time for participants to come back to simply describing what they noticed. There is no need to stick rigidly to a certain ‘progression’ through the inquiry; better to see the ‘circles’ as a map for the teacher.

(iii) teaching of themes conveys understanding of underpinning theoretical principles

Jung’s well known quote is apt here – “Learn your theories as well as you can, but put them aside when you touch the miracle of the living soul” (Contributions to Analytical Psychology, 1928). The mindfulness-based teaching process is designed generally to convey the themes implicitly (through an experiential process of personal discovery) rather than explicitly (through a conceptual process of understanding principles and rationales). The challenge for the mindfulness-based teacher is to know the underpinning theoretical principles thoroughly so that they can inform direction and emphasis within this implicit teaching process, and so that they are readily available for occasional moments of brief didactic teaching.

The majority of the material for exploration within the group is generated by the participants rather than by the teacher – but it is also the teacher’s responsibility to bring in carefully chosen material to inform and add context and understanding to the processes that are under exploration.

(iv) teaching skills – teaching is concise, clear, participatory, playful, alive, responsive, and makes skilful use of teaching aids

- Concise and clear – the teaching crystallises key processes in an accessible manner.
- Participatory – the teaching process draws on all ways in which human beings experience – thinking, sensing and feeling – and aims to engage all these elements within participants during the teaching.
- Didactic teaching is based on material drawn from direct experience; experience of participants is invited in relation to material offered. As much material as possible is drawn out of the

direct experience of the group, so that any didactic material is 'woven' from lived experience – the teacher collaborates with participants to link direct observations of experience to learning relevant to the participant and to the aims of the program. When teaching didactically the teaching is brief and clear, engages all elements of experiencing (thinking, sensing and feeling) and encourages interactive responses from participants' own experience.

- Playful, alive and responsive – the teaching is engaging and inspiring; the participants and the teacher are mutually engaged in a creative exploration of the material; it is a highly 'in the moment process' – the teacher is responsive to the material as it arises in the moment rather than working from a plan or script; the teacher supports participants in navigating towards dimensions of the material which are highly relevant to the immediacy of participants' experience; the teacher shows skill in deflecting participants from getting stuck in their stories, and instead keeps the focus on immediate experience.
- Use of teaching aids – teacher makes skilful and appropriate use of flip chart or other teaching aids (the provision of appropriate teaching aids is assessed in Domain 1 Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum; the use of these aids is assessed here). The teacher integrates direct experiential teaching with teaching drawn from other sources e.g., stories, poetry and quotations, which point to other ways of experiencing.

(v) fluency – teacher conveys ease, familiarity with and confident knowledge of the material

- Ease – the teacher is clearly at home within the material.
- Familiarity with the material – the teacher clearly knows what they are teaching, and is able to move around flexibly within its territory.

- Confidence in the teaching process – the teacher conveys their knowledge and experience and so inspires confidence in the process of the teaching.

Domain 6: Holding the group learning environment

Overview: The whole teaching process takes place within the context of a group, which if facilitated effectively becomes a vehicle for connecting participants with the universality of the processes being explored. The teacher creates a 'container' or learning environment that 'holds' the group and within which the teaching can effectively take place. The teacher works responsively with group process through bringing an appropriate leadership style to the teaching; through taking good care of managing group safety, trust and boundary issues; through employing a teaching style which takes account of the individual within the context of the group, and balances the needs of both; through using the group process to draw out universal learning themes; through working with and responding to group development processes by managing the various phases of group formation, development and ending. The teacher is able to 'tune into', connect with, and respond appropriately to shifts and changes in group mood and characteristics.

Four key features need to be considered in assessing this domain:

(i) learning container – creating and sustaining a rich learning environment made safe through careful management of issues such as ground rules, boundaries and confidentiality, but which is simultaneously a place in which participants can explore and take risks

(ii)group development – clear management of group development processes over the 8 weeks – in particular management of beginnings, challenges from within the group and endings

(iii)common humanity – moving from personal to universal learning – the teacher consistently opens the learning process towards connection with the universality of the processes under exploration (iv)leadership style which offers sustained ‘holding’, demonstrating authority and potency without imposing the teacher’s views on participants.

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2. The Mindfulness Program Agenda

What follows is the Mindfulness Program Agenda developed for the Deora Project:

Week One: "Bring it on"

Agenda:

- Introduce members to one another
- Establish ground rules and deal with any specific concerns members have
- Identify each person's goals and expectations
- Introduce idea of the mind being on autopilot and the dangers inherent in living that way
- Raisin experiment
- Short breathing exercise
- Feedback and Homework
- Distribute guided meditation CD's and handouts

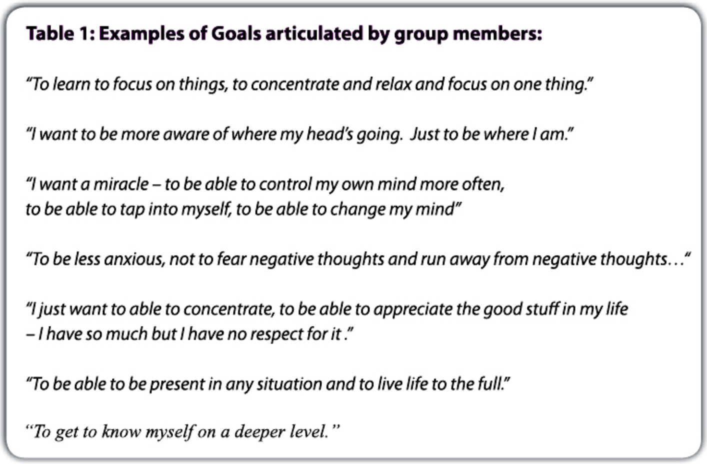


Table 1: Examples of Goals articulated by group members:

"To learn to focus on things, to concentrate and relax and focus on one thing."

"I want to be more aware of where my head's going. Just to be where I am."

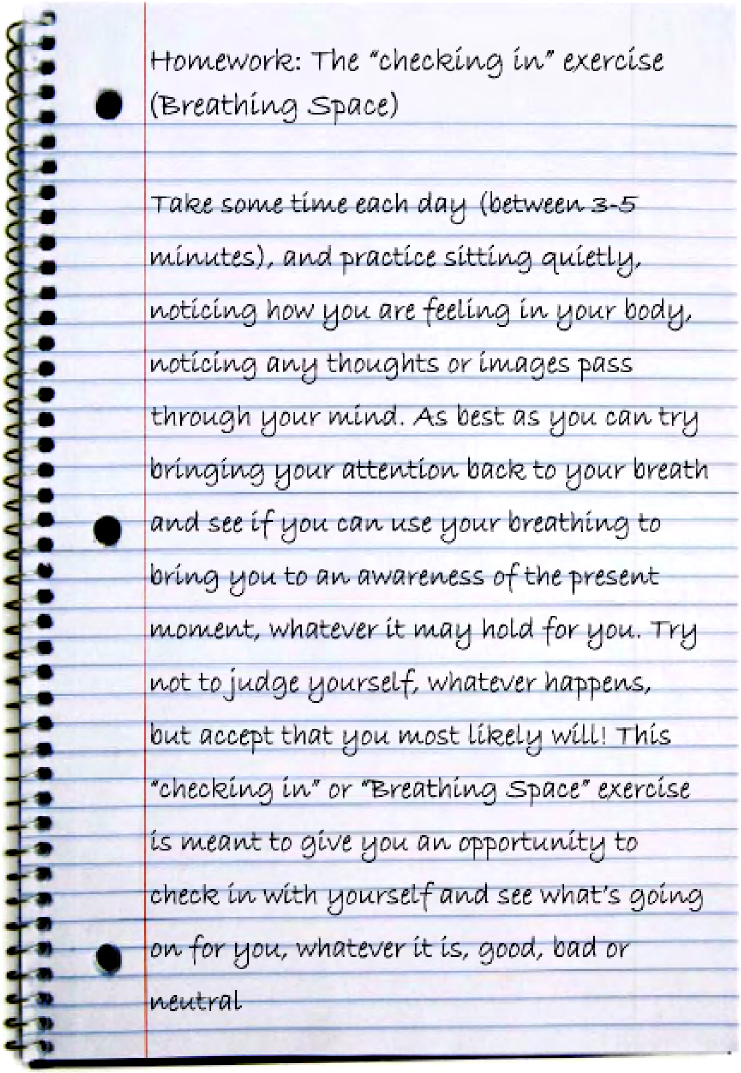
"I want a miracle – to be able to control my own mind more often, to be able to tap into myself, to be able to change my mind"

"To be less anxious, not to fear negative thoughts and run away from negative thoughts…"

"I just want to able to concentrate, to be able to appreciate the good stuff in my life – I have so much but I have no respect for it ."

"To be able to be present in any situation and to live life to the full."

"To get to know myself on a deeper level."



Homework: The "checking in" exercise (Breathing Space)

Take some time each day (between 3-5 minutes), and practice sitting quietly, noticing how you are feeling in your body, noticing any thoughts or images pass through your mind. As best as you can try bringing your attention back to your breath and see if you can use your breathing to bring you to an awareness of the present moment, whatever it may hold for you. Try not to judge yourself, whatever happens, but accept that you most likely will! This "checking in" or "Breathing Space" exercise is meant to give you an opportunity to check in with yourself and see what's going on for you, whatever it is, good, bad or neutral

Week 1

Our primary purpose in the first week of the program was to enable members of the group to experience that they were a unique group, embarking on project that had never been tried before in a setting like Deora and to give them some idea about how were we going to behave as a group over the next nine weeks.

We felt it would be important

1. to hear from each person regarding their expectation, goals, concerns or misgivings,
2. to establish the usual ground rules to ensure this group respected the need for safety and confidentiality among its members.
3. we wanted them to have one or two actual experiences of practicing mindfulness, and give them the opportunity to reflect and give feedback on the experience.
4. We also assigned homework to encourage participants to begin to take their practice home, and into their daily lives.

Thirteen people showed up in addition to the mindfulness team. The members were quiet and clearly a little tense in the opening stages of the group.

1. Goals

As they articulated their personal goals, we were struck by how aware they were of the need to steady their minds and become more grounded in the present moment. It was as though the case for mindfulness had already been made before we ever got around to introducing the concept.

Members described how they mostly felt very out of touch with themselves, noticed how their minds wandered a lot and how hard it was for them to simply be in the present: As one member put it "I want to be more aware of where my head's going. Just to be where I am."

Many also reported feeling anxious, driven, unable to relax. This made it hard for them to be present to people they cared about and to whom they wanted to learn to be more present: " I want to be present when I'm doing things with my sons".

Others hoped that this course would help them be more at ease with themselves, "To learn to relax a bit, I'm very driven as a person", "to get to know my feelings, to be comfortable in myself".

2. Ground rules

In terms of ground rules for the group, we clearly agreed that it should be a safe place for its members and that whatever was said would never be repeated outside of the group in any way that might identify a particular member.

Concern was expressed by some members that they might cry. This was discussed and it was accepted that it was a real possibility for many of them, and that it could be a very positive and important experience.

The team discussed writing notes during the group on group process and publishing an account of the group when it was over, along with some kind of formal evaluation of its impact on the members.

It was important to achieve a clear understanding about the research aspect of this pilot in MBRP and to be given permission by the group (also signed earlier by each of them) to report on the experience to the Deora staff team, and to others working in similar drug projects. All reporting would be done in a completely anonymous manner and no personal details would be disclosed to anyone outside the group program.

3. Practicing Mindfulness and Feedback

Mindfulness was introduced using the well documented "Raisin Experiment" (See Segal et al, 2002).

A small chocolate mini egg was used on this occasion instead of a raisin, due to lack of availability of raisins. The basic idea was that an individual egg was placed in the palm of each member's hand and they would imagine they had never seen one before and get to know it as an entirely new experience, using each of their five senses and giving it their full concentration. This is always a fun way to give people an actual experience of focusing their full attention on an object, in the present moment, and experiencing what can happen when we let go of preconceptions about reality and make contact with old familiar realities in a new, fresh way.

An important component of mindfulness training is the opportunity for each group member to reflect on whatever experience they had whilst engaged in any given exercise. Feedback was encouraged, and whatever happened for someone (there was no such thing as a 'good' or 'bad' experience) was valued as important. Some people really got into the exercise - "It was like a form of meditation – I was there, just looking at it – in the present". Others found they became distracted very easily - "I was daydreaming."

All reactions were equally valuable and revealing, and the exercise helped to bring into focus some of the issues that mindfulness would be addressing as the course proceeded, e.g. difficulty with concentration, the mind's tendency to wander, and problems created by harsh self attacking thoughts.

To conclude this first session, one of the facilitators (Clive) guided the group in a short breathing exercise, to focus on the breath and observe whatever was happening with an attitude of curiosity and acceptance. As one member of the group later described the experience, this was like looking at whatever you were feeling and saying "Bring it on". Rather than trying to change their feelings or get rid of some unpleasant thought, we asked them to "let themselves be" and notice how they felt in their bodies.

Feedback:

The reactions were mixed: from "It reminded me of Mrs. Dalloway – I could hear the clock tick, the dog bark and the distant wave. All was well" to "I just switched off, thought of the sea".

One person's reaction to this exercise came as something of a surprise: "It's like something came over me, I couldn't even hear you (Clive) after a few minutes; it was mad, like a lightness… it was a bit scary. It was like I was really relaxed but for a split second or two this kind of lightness came over me. I got a fright, thought I'd snap myself out of it".

We encouraged her to adopt a kindly but curious attitude to her experience. And to notice what happened within her when she shared this experience with others in the room. She regained a full sense of being grounded within minutes, but it was suggested that we should begin with very short breathing exercises and check in frequently with participants.

Post-group analysis:

In our post-group analysis, the facilitation team felt that perhaps more formal breathing exercises should be introduced later in the program, and that the early sessions should maintain a focus on helping people – through body scan exercise, mindful stretching and yoga – to reconnect with their bodily experiences and become firmly grounded.

Week Two: "Just because we're addicts it doesn't make us any different"

Agenda:

- Any feedback / comments on session 1
- Review individual experiences with homework assignment
- Brief breathing exercise
- Introduce and complete full Body Scan (BS) - using John Kabat-Zinn CD
- Discuss each person's experience of BS
- Distribute body scan CD's and handouts
- Set homework

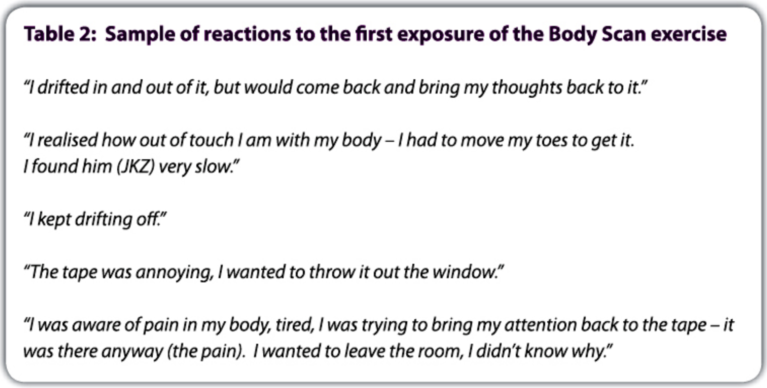


Table 2: Sample of reactions to the first exposure of the Body Scan exercise

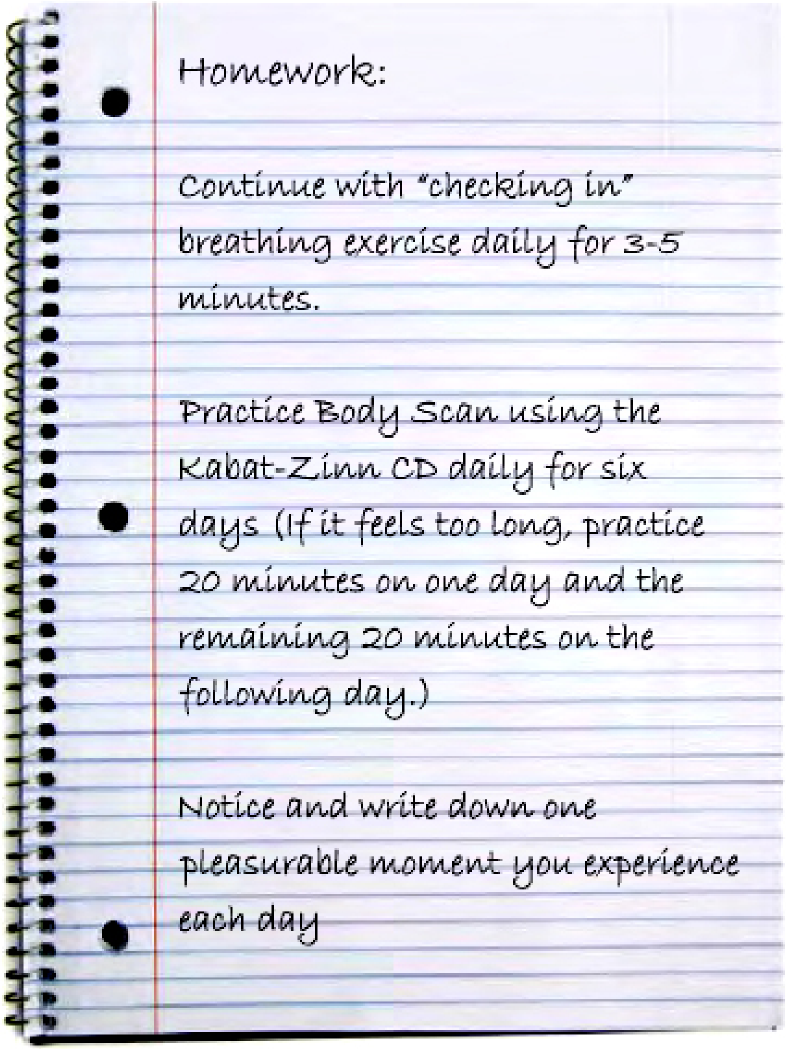
"I drifted in and out of it, but would come back and bring my thoughts back to it."

"I realised how out of touch I am with my body – I had to move my toes to get it.
I found him (JKZ) very slow."

"I kept drifting off."

"The tape was annoying, I wanted to throw it out the window."

"I was aware of pain in my body, tired, I was trying to bring my attention back to the tape – it was there anyway (the pain). I wanted to leave the room, I didn't know why."



Homework:

Continue with "checking in" breathing exercise daily for 3-5 minutes.

Practice Body Scan using the Kabat-Zinn CD daily for six days (If it feels too long, practice 20 minutes on one day and the remaining 20 minutes on the following day.)

Notice and write down one pleasurable moment you experience each day

Week 2

Reactions to the first meeting were generally positive, but some people were disappointed as they hoped that this course might provide a simpler, faster solution to their emotional distress. One lady, who subsequently reported finding great benefit in the course overall, commented "Last week I was disappointed, I wanted something life-changing, quick!".

Group members were very vocal about their positive and negative experiences of attempting a brief mindfulness - "checking in exercise" during the past week. There were several reports of finding it hard to make time - "I struggled just giving it time, to give it to myself is very hard, I can do it here", "I was doing it, but only for a few minutes on the bus or something". One person noticed how distressed his thoughts were – "My head was mental, I was having insane thoughts", and another picked up on how judgemental he was being with himself – "It's good, I get calm, but by the time I get to the hall door it's gone, then I start beating myself up for not being able to do it".

It was important to hear a wide range of reactions and it was important that the team accepted them all with equanimity - to react calmly to each one, without appearing to be selectively favouring some and discouraging others. The challenge for the team was to model a "mindful" response to whatever experiences people were having, so that the group could gradually recognise that this was what we meant by being non-judgemental.

Body scan exercise:

TB used stick drawings to illustrate how the mind can very often be in a different time zone to the body and asked group members to reflect on their own experiences of being "disconnected". He then asked the group what it was like to live like this (given that we all do so much of the time). One person responded "It's not living, you're not present". It was agreed by everyone present that being out of touch with one's body and feelings was a major risk for someone in recovery as tensions and urges could creep up on you unawares and get the better of you. The idea of taking some time daily to check in systematically with your body and "stay in touch with it" became the rationale for the Body Scan exercise, which is simply a slowed down body awareness exercise, where attention is brought very systematically to each part of one's body.

As one of the participants described in the follow-up interviews, addiction brings with it a fundamental mind-body disconnection, mindfulness allowed her to confront this in a gentle way: "I walked around for 2 years with a shoulder that was out when I was addicted…. I did register the pain, got migraines etc., I felt it severely, but I was still running from it, wouldn't confront it."

A recording of John Kabat-Zinn's (JKZ) guided body scan exercise was used because the team had purchased copies of this CD for each person to practice at home, and it was felt that they should be introduced to it within the formal program.

Feedback:

Reactions to the Body Scan exercise were mixed, but with more people responding unfavourably than favourably. Table 2 gives a sample of some of these reactions.

Some group members wanted JKZ to move a lot faster. Some realised that the reason the body scan is slow is that it is as much training for your mind to remain focused as any other meditation exercise. And that it takes time to feel what's happening in your body when you've been out of touch with it for a long time. And someone else did report how she had arrived in a negative mood, not knowing why, only to realise through the body scan that she was extremely angry: "I was very angry within myself when I came in… in a rage actually. By doing the BS I felt like I was able to be in my body more". Another member spoke of becoming aware of a stiffness in her neck, she hadn't previously noticed.

Those who had found the CD unhelpful now began to wonder if the whole course was designed "by-Americans-for-Americans" and voiced their concern that maybe none of it would work for them, particularly with their complex history of drug abuse. But one man challenged this view and pointed out that "just because we're addicts it doesn't make us any different". He added: "I feel quite honoured to be part of this. I didn't always feel like that. I just thought I was there to line the counsellors' pockets. Now I'm opening my mind. Before I'd rebel, but all I ever did was rob myself of opportunities like this one".

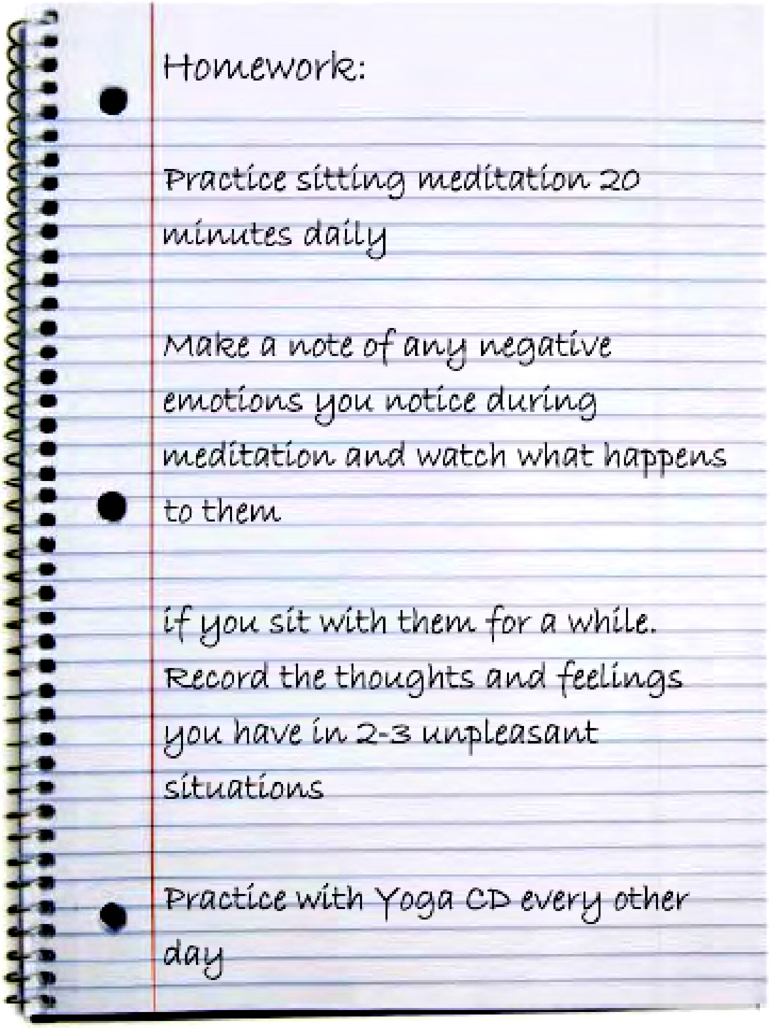
Post-group team reflection:

It was felt that the group had been much more engaged and "real" in this session and that the message had gotten through that mindfulness was not magic and that it required some degree of work. There had been a moment when TB responded a little too defensively to one comment that the group were all guinea pigs. Again a key theme in running mindfulness groups is to be able to take whatever arises and respond in a curious but somewhat neutral way. It was agreed by all the team that producing our own, somewhat briefer, body scan exercise would make this key ingredient of mindfulness training much more accessible. For the time being, we would provide them with copies of Mark Williams' body scan CD next week.

Week three: Mindfulness creates a space where you can hold your life in awareness and see what you need to do

Agenda:

- Review homework
- Introduce and practice Yoga
- Reflect on experience of doing yoga
- Automatic thinking and how it influences our mood and behaviour
- Mindful awareness of automatic thinking and how it enables change
- Mindful sitting exercise (20 min)
- Feedback and homework
- Distribute CD's and handouts



Homework:

Practice sitting meditation 20 minutes daily

Make a note of any negative emotions you notice during meditation and watch what happens to them

if you sit with them for a while. Record the thoughts and feelings you have in 2-3 unpleasant situations

Practice with Yoga CD every other day

Week 3

Today the group started with a very lively discussion of homework, captured perfectly in one report "When I came out last week I didn't want to do the homework but I knew I had to. The first night I didn't do it, I was beating myself up for it. The second night I came in late, the CD (body scan) didn't work. I felt great!"

The other exercise – record pleasurable moments in the day – had captured everyone's imagination and seemed to work very well.

- "I did do the pleasurable moments – there were things in that. I went to the aqua centre. The inner child is there but the macho head is pulling it back. I rang my family, I'm happy for them but also that I'm not there. I allowed my inner child to come out"
- "Writing the positive events down was great, to remember them, cause I'm not good at remembering that and you're reliving it as you write it down. When it's happening I don't really stop and enjoy it (the moment)… I skate over it. Now I stopped, was aware of it all. It was a very powerful thing to do"
- "It was in my head during the day – journaling the pleasurable moments – so in some ways I had an antenna for it".
- "I did the 'moments homework' – I had more sad moments but that's probably just where I was at."
- "I did some meditation during the week. I found it very hard. I love coming here 'cause I can't give myself the time. Coming here, realizing the amount of tension in my body… there's a lot of indecision in my head, change in my life, big decisions to make."
- "Some days it was great, others I had my eye on the clock…it was an irrational agitation. The bottom line is that sometimes I find it hard to sit with myself. I want to escape. I was watching all sorts of crap on telly. There are days I don't even want to entertain the thought of being with myself. I knew that's exactly what was going on".

Yoga

Orla introduced yoga exercises and spoke about their value in helping us connect with our bodies and use this to ground ourselves in the present moment.

She took the group through a range of Hatha yoga exercises that involved standing and lying down.

She brought people through the exercises at a fairly swift pace and this appealed a lot to the group. When we reviewed their experiences afterwards, it became even clearer that the yoga had engaged their attention completely and that it had made them very aware of their breathing and bodily experience.

- "I was concentrating fully on the exercises"
- "I noticed I was weaker on the left side"
- "When you focus on breathing, inhale into it, you can go more. I stopped using my brain, just breathed through it."
- "I really enjoyed it. It's better than the gym. I had been doing Reiki but the teacher was 'getting in contact with the spiritual world' so I said stop!"
- "The last breathing exercise we did was the first time that I've ever stayed with meditation. Last week I was thinking about sea gulls, I was in space. Why? Suppose I'm doing a lot of surrender in my life at the moment. Yoga took my mind off why I was here, but doing it mindfully helped… yeah, that helped. It's starting to come together for me"

Awareness of Automatic Thoughts exercise

To introduce automatic negative thoughts and their power in shaping our perceptions of the world and how we react to everyday events, we had the group imagine the following scenario:

You are walking down the street and someone from a program you'd attended walks towards you on the other side of the street. You are happy too see this person and you had a good relationship with them when you both went through the program together. As they walk towards you, they appear to be looking in your direction, but they keep walking on and don't acknowledge in any way that they see you.

After listening to this scenario, each person was invited to write down whatever thoughts had passed through their minds as they imagined themselves in that situation. Also to note down any feelings they may have had. This exercise demonstrated how rapidly or "automatically" we make interpretations of routine everyday events (mostly without ever being aware that we are doing this) and how our emotional reactions are powerfully affected by the interpretations we make. The group mostly jumped to very negative conclusions and felt badly within themselves that the person across the street had chosen to ignore them. Their thoughts "seemed true" but as they each shared their experience of this exercise, they group began to realise that in any given situation, many interpretations are possible:

- "If someone gives you a compliment you can be embarrassed, angry, happy. The key is your interpretation, not the stimulus"
- "You don't call out to them either (the person ignoring you), you don't check reality, I suppose it's a self-obsession thing"
- "It's funny, if it happens to someone else I can see it's irrational, I like to think that I'm more impartial, that I have distance, perspective"

The value of mindfulness in helping to become aware of our automatic thoughts was discussed. If we could somehow catch ourselves as we were becoming pulled into some familiar negative interpretation of an event, we might be able to pause and change how we react, instead of being pulled into some self-defeating behaviour that may start us down the slippery slope to relapse.

The really dangerous space to get into is where you just react in the absence of any awareness. When we react without thinking, it's generally because our feelings are pretty strong and we have little time or capacity to think about what we're about to do, and whether we really want to act in a particular way.

Mindfulness introduces a pause between the stimulus and the response; it creates a space where we can look at what's happening and make choices. We may choose to act in the same old way we always have, but we may also choose to act in a different way and see what happens. It's up to me, but at least this time I am making a free choice.

This same principle applies when painful or difficult memories are triggered and we react against them and act in a destructive way towards them. Mindfulness gives us the capacity to see what's going on and to hold our distress in awareness, until it begins to ease and transform. Mindfulness buys us time and helps prevent us from making the same old mistakes over and over. Mindfulness also has power to transform negative emotions, not by pushing them away but holding them gently in awareness, like we would a child in distress.

The session ended with a brief sitting meditation, after which Clive read a poem by Rumi to settle everyone down before the group left the session.

Post session team analysis:

This session made the team much more aware that this is a group of people that carry a lot of inner tension and trauma. Many have had experiences that they would prefer not to remember. Many have a great deal of chaos in their lives, in terms of where they physically live, economic pressures and stresses emanating from within their extended families. For some, the desire to run away is very strong, an understandable in many ways. Any kind of self-awareness training with a group like this has to be carefully paced and carried out in tandem with skills teaching to deal with the realities in their lives that are severely challenging.

On reflection, the authors would recommend that in future courses, trainers take more time to emphasise the importance of participants accessing additional support to cope with whatever comes up during the course. This was in fact suggested by one of the participants in the follow-up interviews.

The issue of non-attendance by some members was raised. Although there were a few apologies, it was clear that others who had begun the program may well have chosen to drop out. This needed to be raised in the group rather than avoided, in some vain hope that they might show up in future sessions.

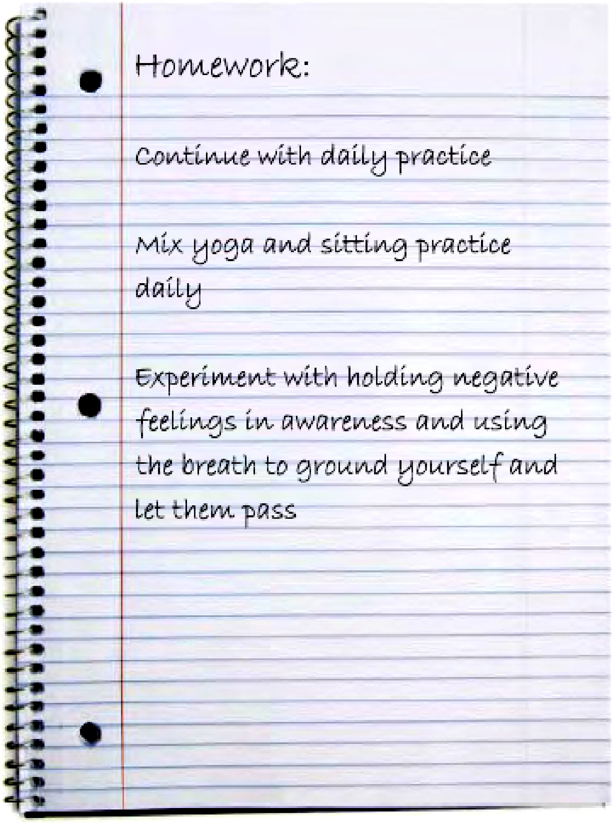
Generally the team felt the group were achieving a genuine sense of cohesion. Many comments were made between the group members themselves, and many reflected a tremendous capacity for empathy between themselves. One or two members were "burning to tell their story" but the team felt that we should be careful not to let one individual say too much in case his trust level in the group was not quite up to his appetite for self-disclosure. It was suggested that perhaps he could have some time with his own therapist in a one to one this particular week, so that he could ventilate freely and safely.

Movement exercise at the beginning and sitting quietly at the end seemed to work very well in this session.

Week four: “Cradling your cravings”

Agenda:

- Review and discuss homework /personal practice
- Yoga (30 min)
- Being aware and coping with urges / cravings
- Assign homework
- Distribute Pema Chodron CD’s and handouts



Homework:

Continue with daily practice

Mix yoga and sitting practice daily

Experiment with holding negative feelings in awareness and using the breath to ground yourself and let them pass

Week 4

When this session began, it was evident that energy was very low. It may have been perhaps because only six people turned up. It also became clear from their discussion of experiences with homework – recognising and writing down their thoughts and feelings in "unpleasant situations" (what also became clear from this? Maybe it's just the phrasing here, but I don't get the point…).

Members described some objectively difficult situations and how being aware of their reactions had helped them to cope (or not).
"My unpleasantness was over a funeral… there's nothing more unpleasant than that – there was regret, anger, sadness, pacing back and forward and all that… like I didn't know what to do"

We explored this further with him and his notes showed that he felt "angry (100%), regret (60-70%)".

Noticing he felt that way and allowing himself to be upset had helped him to get through it without doing anything self-destructive.

Death, anniversaries, feelings of loss and guilt were very common experiences recorded by the group. There was a keen sense in the room that recovery for each of them was a "life or death" matter. And if mindfulness could help them stay alive, they wanted to give it every chance.

"The way I look at it, once I stay clean they didn't die in vain… Even now, I don't call them by their names cause that gets closer to the emotions… I'd do anything to recover – for me it's even recover or die – I've already relapsed twice…"

While some of the participants found the homework difficult, the positive impact that this simple journaling exercise had on some participants came through in the follow-up interviews. As one participant stated:

"It (the course) got me to recognise that my feelings, good and bad, pass. Like the homework exercise, when we had to write down good and bad feelings and how they pass was great. The good ones made me laugh, the bad ones were hard… noticing the bad feelings passed made me feel guilty that I wasn't feeling good all the time. The homework helped me deal with it, accept it, 'I can't do anything about it'"

The main issue for discussion in this session was how to recognise and cope with urges and cravings. Many of them were confused about this idea of being present and accepting one's feelings and cravings, versus giving into them.

One man captured the idea of being "mindfully aware" of urges and craving pretty well: "It's like, when you get a craving, to accept them and go through it rather than running away from them and turning to something else, cause then it would just come back worse. When it hits me, I just go through it, the cravings will only last 3 or 4 minutes, a cigarette only lasts 3 or 4 minutes, and then it's only one, then the next time I'd beat myself up and before the craving even comes I'll give in. Mindfulness makes you aware that they are only feelings, not more sinister, even though it feels that way sometimes".

Another person described how she was overcome with anger after an unpleasant encounter with a city official. Her day had started out very well, as she had the insight during her practice that we "make up our realities". She had found this idea very liberating and felt that she'd finally "got what mindfulness was about". However, after her frustrating encounter she "completely lost it". She described feeling sorry for herself and becoming carried away with a "story in my head" that she would always be miserable. And then the thought hit her: "wouldn't it be great to get drunk!" She described how she "cradled this feeling" for a long time before deciding to do something constructive, which seemed to "break the spell". This led to a very important discussion about how people reacted to urges and cravings.

A member responded to the above account with the observation that she wasn't so much cradling the feeling as "linking arms with it, going down the road with it, not holding it."

One of the team summed up the message we were giving as "it's holding something still rather than letting the puppy take you for a walk". This message wasn't completely clear and some people felt confused.

Once again, clarity came from within the group itself. The challenge as somebody described is "to find your way back after you've been taken for a ride". And someone else added: "It's about stopping, if you go with it it's like a snowball. It gets bigger and sucks everything in its path. For years I felt lonely, I was hurting…. It's to hold it, to accept it. At home I get a belt of 'you're lonely' or 'you're an eejit'… it's about getting up off the chair… if it hurts feel the hurt: Is it just in my heart or is it in my legs or my body? It's to feel the pain, not to jump up and run away. At the beginning I thought they were all off their heads (when they told me to 'feel the pain), I thought 'I've been feeling it for years!' but then I stopped. I felt the pain. It was everywhere. In my heart, my head my legs… now it hasn't come back for a long time. For years I had been making my problems bigger and bigger and the pain was getting bigger and bigger".

Yoga followed and the energy within the group rose steadily. Session ended with a very quiet and deep sitting practice. Increasingly there is less need to provide guided instructions for mindful meditation and people have become very comfortable with silence.

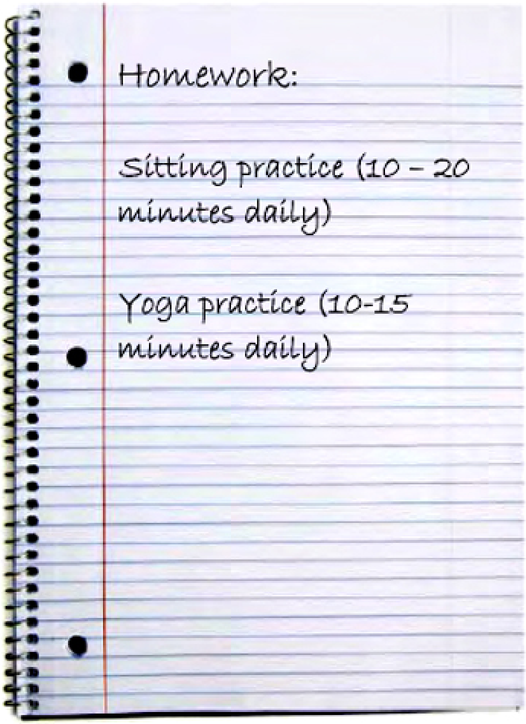
Post session analysis:

The team felt we needed to make sure to remove extra chairs when members fail to show up. This allows people to sit more closely together and helps build cohesion. Given that it became obvious very early on in the group that their energy was low, it might have been wiser to abandon the agenda momentarily and ask the group what that was about. We might also have extended to them the option of doing the yoga before getting into the difficult territory of strong negative emotions. The whole issue of coping with strong emotions needs further clarification. Also some practical skills for coping with cravings and urges would have added a lot today.

Week five: "emotions are messengers"

Agenda:

- Discuss missing people and how that feels for those present
- Review homework and experiences with personal practice
- Yoga practice
- Discuss emotions: what they can teach us about ourselves and how to cope with them
- Short talk by invited guest (someone who has used mindfulness successfully to face very difficult challenges in his life)
- Distribute handouts



Homework:

Sitting practice (10 – 20 minutes daily)

Yoga practice (10-15 minutes daily)

Week 5

We began today with an invitation to the remaining group members to express how they felt about some people dropping out, or how it felt when other group members had failed to show up and then re-appeared. By and large they appeared un-fussed by people who left or didn't show. Part of that was because of their considerable experience of being on group programs where this happened regularly: "I'm used to it by now, it happens in every group". And partly, their reaction reflected a strong philosophy of looking out for number one and not counting too much on anyone else: "I'm here for myself", "It's about my recovery ultimately, not anyone else", "I try not to depend on people, it's what I've learnt". One member did find that when others dropped out, it undermined her confidence in this program: "I do start to wonder what am I doing here if all these other people are dropping out?"

The group took time to sit a while and get centred before reviewing homework. There was further evidence of people finding it hard to cope with the degree of tension and /or distress they encountered in themselves when they tried to practice.

- "I find it very hard to do meditating, my mind doesn't want me to do it, but I just tell myself 'discipline, discipline, discipline'. I can do about ten minutes but I feel all the tension in my body… I just want to kick out, to clench my hands… I just want to run"
- "I'm the same, I find it very hard to meditate, hard to stay still… I'd be trying to force myself to feel relaxed"

But many self-reports shared among the group spoke of having had some very positive experiences when practicing.

- "I ate my cereal really slow, I noticed all the textures and the tastes. I noticed I was absent – I say 'absent without leave' a lot of the time. A lot of the time when I was driving… my brain was

just somewhere else most of the time… I was trying to be mindful of everyday things"
- "Some days I have wobbly thoughts, but I try to 'let it be' and just come back to my breathing"
- "For the first time in my life I've noticed how nasty I am to myself…"

The major portion of the first half of this session was given over to 25 minutes Yoga, followed by 15 minute sitting meditation (with 1-minute breaks where we checked that people were doing ok)).

Emotions

We discussed emotions as being the body's language for how we were experiencing the world. Emotions were messengers that were trying to alert us to something that was happening between us and the world. We could disregard them or we could 'invite them in' and listen to what they might be alerting us to. Our emotional reactions can be very subjective and therefore do not always correspond accurately with what's happening in the external world, but they do identify very accurately how we are feeling in ourselves and thus they provide us with important information.

They are a more reliable source of information than our automatic thoughts. And they can also be a good radar system, telling us when something in our world isn't quite right.

The problem for most of us is that we're on auto pilot most of the time and we don't even notice what we're feeling until our emotions are so strong that they overwhelm us. Mindfulness teaches us how to come off autopilot and take time to notice painful emotions as they begin to gather force. And as one member pointed out, "if we don't listen, we can end up dead."

We read and discussed Rumi's poem "The Guest House" and I offered to show DVD of Thich Nhat Hahn next week where he speaks about specific techniques for coping with strong emotions, which sparked a lot of interest within the group.

The Guest House

by Mewlana Jalaluddin Rumi

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Invited speaker – Frank

Frank (aged 37 years) had been a member of the St James's Hospital mindfulness training course and follow up support group for the past 5-6years. He had developed a very stable, strong practice which helped him to avoid relapse and hospitalisation since 2000 (he had been hospitalised 27-30 times in the previous 20 years, generally for months at a time, for severe bi-polar disorder) although he had been given many other diagnoses between age 14 and 30). In so many ways his recovery was remarkable and he attributed this primarily to the benefits of mindfulness.

I invited him to speak to the group about his practice and how it got stronger over the years. He did this very well and the group were clearly captivated by his account and impressed by how recovered Frank was now.

Frank added further that just as he got over his "little psychiatric problem", he was told that a nagging pain he had had in his side was pancreatic cancer. He has known this since January 07 and the prognosis is pretty grim. He spoke very openly about this, without any extreme emotion and with a lightness of touch that was sensitive to his listeners. Frank was not someone that would seek to "talk up" his emotions or try to provoke upset in others. Quite the contrary, he spoke simply, didn't labour the point that he was almost certainly facing death, but didn't deny the reality of this and the challenge it was for him emotionally.

The group were very deeply affected by the poignancy of his story and a few shed tears. But they also heard how incredibly helpful mindfulness had been through it all and how, when it came to coping with intense

Post session analysis:

Yoga in the early stage of the group worked very well to settle them down and to bring their energy and attention "up".

Allowing time for extended sitting meditation, where we took 1-minute breaks to check and see how people were doing was felt to have worked very well.

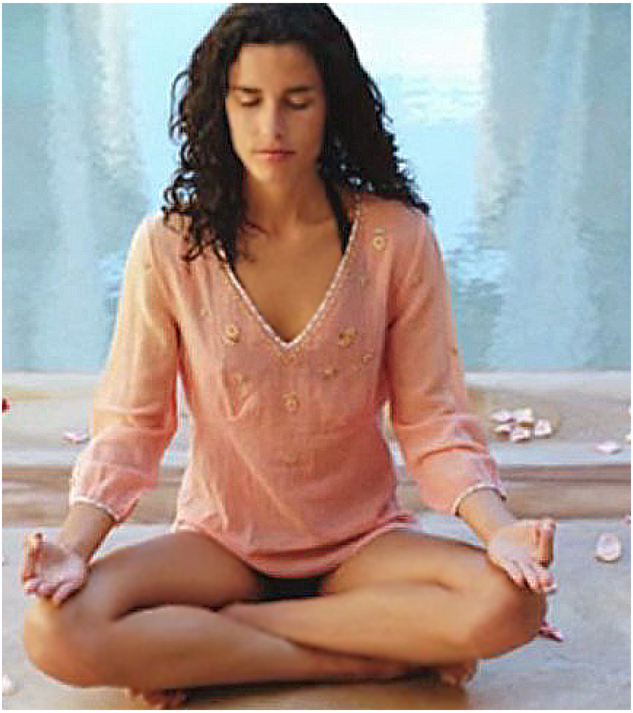
Frank had made a powerful impact on the group and it was agreed that his presence for the remainder of the program - particularly on our away day - would help to galvanise the group and increase their motivation and confidence in the practice.

The teaching on emotion needed longer time and more practical examples and opportunities to practice accepting and allowing feelings to emerge. This is a key challenge for this group and perhaps also for this client population. It needs to be worked out much more precisely next time round.

Week Six: Knowing what sets me off, catching myself before it's too late

Agenda:

- Review homework
- Brief Sitting meditation,
- Yoga (30 minutes)
- Identifying relapse triggers
- Play and discuss "Dealing with emotional storms DVD (40 min)
- Distribute "Emotional storms" CD and handouts



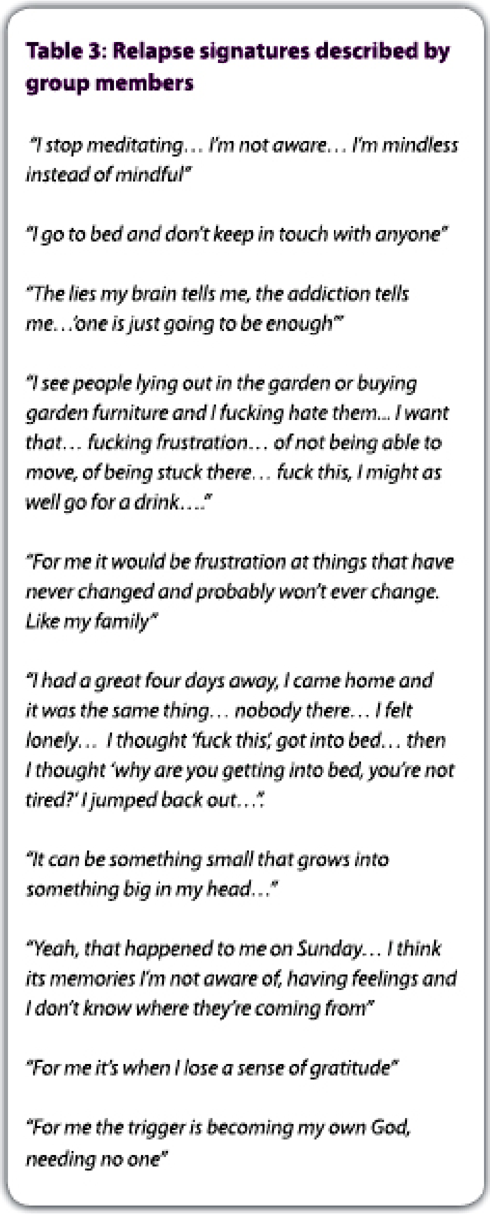


Table 3: Relapse signatures described by group members

"I stop meditating… I'm not aware… I'm mindless instead of mindful"

"I go to bed and don't keep in touch with anyone"

"The lies my brain tells me, the addiction tells me…'one is just going to be enough'"

"I see people lying out in the garden or buying garden furniture and I fucking hate them... I want that… fucking frustration… of not being able to move, of being stuck there… fuck this, I might as well go for a drink…."

"For me it would be frustration at things that have never changed and probably won't ever change. Like my family"

"I had a great four days away, I came home and it was the same thing… nobody there… I felt lonely… I thought 'fuck this,' got into bed… then I thought 'why are you getting into bed, you're not tired?' I jumped back out…".

"It can be something small that grows into something big in my head…"

"Yeah, that happened to me on Sunday… I think its memories I'm not aware of, having feelings and I don't know where they're coming from"

"For me it's when I lose a sense of gratitude"

"For me the trigger is becoming my own God, needing no one"

Week 6

We began with sitting meditation. There was very active engagement with this exercise by the group.

Members tuned in very quickly to how they were feeling and shared this openly afterwards. We moved directly into yoga practice, outside in the garden, and returned to group room where people shared any changes they noticed in how they were now feeling. The idea was to give them an experience of the "impermanence of feelings": Feelings come and go; it can be enough to notice them, to acknowledge that whatever I am feeling is simply what I'm feeling, to continue to bring my attention back to the present moment, through focusing on the breath, through engaging in some activity, and to notice how feelings shift and change.

With emotions that are intense and painful, it was also important to learn specific coping techniques. For this reason we would be showing a DVD on "Coping with emotional storms" by Thich Nhat Hahn in the second half of the session.

Identifying key situations, events, that can provoke a relapse into old thinking and behaviour patterns Different situations, events and emotions can set off a chain reaction that leads to relapse. Each person needs to know what sets them off and to take evasive action before it's too late. It is helpful to know one's personal "relapse signature", i.e. those warning signs that tell me I may be moving towards danger.

The above examples revealed a range of behaviours, thoughts and strong feelings (some which appeared to come out of nowhere) that people could identify as important warning signs of possible relapse.

We then tried to develop these insights a bit further by having members draw out their personal "relapse maps", i.e. that chain of thoughts feelings and behaviours that seemed to carry them towards addictive behaviour, e.g. “Your head starts to go first, you don’t use and then go mad. It can be so subtle. I was doing recovery stuff before I relapsed but I was doing it automatically, my heart wasn’t in it. I’d actually relapsed before I picked up the drug… you can get the buzz before you even get near the drug… the anticipation and then the hit. I loved it, for a minute, and then the minute went.”

Coping with emotional storms:

Watching Thich Nhat Hahn DVD

Thich Nath Hahn is a Zen Buddhist monk whose writings - e.g. “The Miracle of Mindfulness” published in 1972 - have had an enormous impact on the development of structured mindfulness training programs in health care situations. Thus, his approach to mindfulness training is very evident in the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program for chronic physical diseases developed and taught by John Kabat-Zinn in the USA and also in the Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy program (MBCT) for depression developed by John Teasdale and Mark Williams in the UK. Both these programs now have been scientifically researched and shown to have significant benefits. This DVD on emotional crises is particularly relevant to the needs of this population and describes some very practical methods for using mindfulness to steady ourselves and take care of ourselves when we experience intense emotions that can easily overwhelm us.

This DVD elaborates on a number of very profound ideas, in very simple language, for dealing with strong emotions. Thich Nath Hahn uses very familiar images and metaphors to give people a sense of exactly what’s involved in each of the steps he describes.

Strong emotions, he says, can take us by surprise and we should learn to recognise the signs before it is too late. Strong emotions can lead to suicidal behaviour, as some people feel that suicide is the only way they can get free of their strong emotions. Emotions are powerful energies that arise from our unconscious and if we do not learn to deal with them they can overpower us. We should prepare in advance for emotional storms by learning how to embrace our feelings and emotions. We have to begin to learn how to deal with emotions right now, because when the storm hits, it may be too late. Like the way we prepare for winter; we cut wood in the summer and let it dry so that it can be of use to us when winter comes. It is too late to cut wood in the winter-time. We should not wait until then.

Some of the points made by Thich Nhat Hahn on the DVD about emotional storms:

- Our emotions are only a part of us. We are more than our emotion. We should write on a piece of paper and carry it around "dear emotion, you are only a part of me".
- The challenge is to mobilise other elements in us to take care of the emotion. If you have been practicing mindful breathing, you are prepared to mobilise mindful energy to take care of your painful emotion.
- Our emotion is not our enemy, it is our "baby"; we need to know we can take care of it. By recognising the emotion, embracing the emotion, I can experience relief.
- Our well being in a crisis is like a tree being blown around in a storm. If we look at the upper part of the tree, we see it being blown around, and we may feel it is so fragile and vulnerable. But if we bring our attention to the trunk of the tree, and think about how firmly rooted it is in the soil, we can have a very different feeling. We see that is stable. During the experience of strong emotion, we also should not stay on the level of the head or the heart, we need to bring our attention to our naval, and become aware of our breathing. Lying down, placing our hand on our belly, and breathing deep and slow. We need to hold firm to - "cling to" - our in-breath and out-breath, until the storm passes. What we do meanwhile is to maintain an awareness of our

breathing and keep ourselves firmly grounded in the present moment.

- Emotions are impermanent, they do pass. By surrounding the emotion with mindful awareness, the emotion loses much of its power and energy. When it passes back into our subconscious, it will not be as strong. It has taken a "bath of mindfulness" and next time it comes up it will be a little weaker.
- We have survived emotions before, and each time we do, we grow strong. Each time we experience them and survive, we also grow in our confidence to look after the part of our mind that is capable of feeling intense pain.
- We are afraid of the elements in our unconscious that feel intense fear, despair, anger etc. We are so afraid that we set up blocks within our mind so that these feelings won't arise. We do this without being aware that we are doing it. Every time we sense these feelings might arise, we get busy. We keep our minds occupied so as not to feel whatever we have locked into "mental basements". And we fill our conscious "living rooms" with as much distraction as possible. But of course hidden pain and hurt feelings do arise despite our best efforts to suppress them. In our dreams and sometimes in our waking lives, we are made aware of strong emotions that we carry within us.
- Repression of feelings also sets up a situation of bad circulation between our conscious and our deeper minds. We suffer symptoms, sometimes they are physical, other times repression of our feelings can lead to symptoms of mental illness. The solution is to open the door of our mental basement and allow them arise. But we need to be able to look after them when they do. And this is why we practice mindfulness and build up our capacity to surround and transform painful emotions that are present in us.
- The energy of mindfulness is strengthened by practicing with others and by deepening our understanding of how our mind works. In psychotherapy, we practitioners can bring mindful

energy to others and make it safe for them to bring out painful emotions that they cannot cope with alone.

- During the time that painful emotions are not present, we should take advantage of this to practice mindful walking and mindful sitting. With each in-breath, with each step, we can say "I have arrived" and with each out-breath, each step we can say "I am home". This helps us to develop an easy rhythm and to remind ourselves that we are choosing to arrive in the present moment, rather than keep running away. This is an "act of revolution" because it reverses the way we normally live.

Post-session analysis:

The group feels like its really dealing with fundamental issues of concern to relapse prevention.

We could do a lot on the subject of relapse prevention, maybe having them literally write down the chain of thoughts-feelings-behaviours that lead to relapse, and also a list of actions they could take to pull themselves out of a nose dive. Mindfulness enhances their capacity to be aware when trouble is looming, or to see themselves walking themselves into danger. The DVD described 'internal' coping mechanisms which could help them weather whatever storm hits; there are also probably some practical 'external' coping mechanisms they could employ to avert a relapse.

Week seven: Practice, practice, practice…

Agenda:

- Practice and consolidate all of the exercises the group has been introduced to so far.
- Play CD excerpts (omitted in earlier sessions due to lack of time.)
- Discuss any issues re mindfulness that remain unclear to the group.
- Discuss termination of the program
- Individual recovery plans

Week 7

The group were taken by bus to a meditation centre by the sea where we all spent a day (10am – 4 pm) practicing mindful sitting, mindful walking, Yoga, listening to excerpts from tapes and CDs, eating in silence together, and planning what they each needed to do to support their own continued recovery. The day was marked by a great deal of silence and concentration. I think this is an important day where the emphasis is on the various practices themselves, rather than on teaching, problem-solving and discussion which dominate the weekly sessions.

Because it was important for the team to fully engage in the practices during the entire day, and be present with the others as they also practiced, it was decided not to take notes. No new material, handouts or CDs were introduced on this day. There was a keen awareness among the group that this program was drawing to a close.

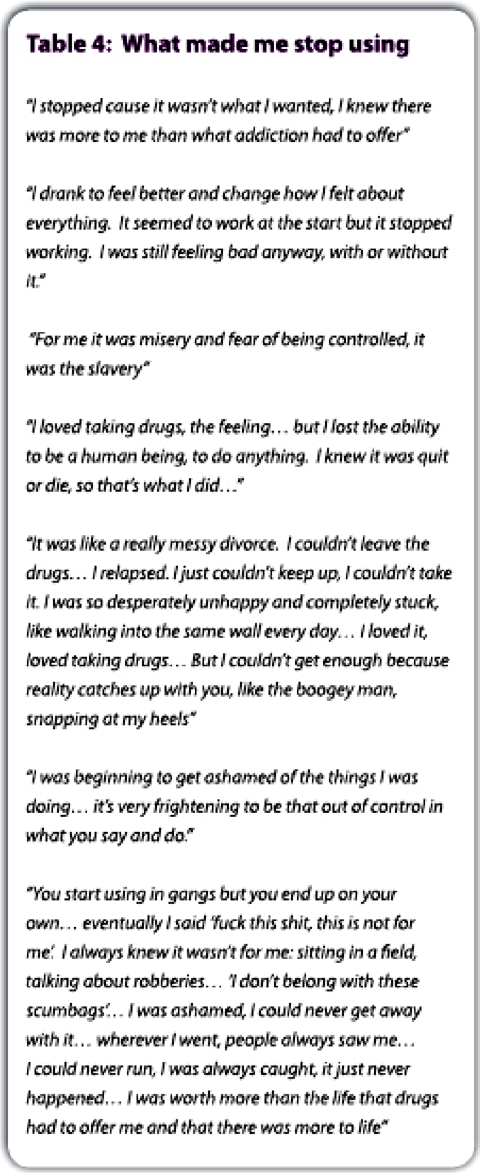


Table 4: What made me stop using

"I stopped cause it wasn't what I wanted, I knew there was more to me than what addiction had to offer"

"I drank to feel better and change how I felt about everything. It seemed to work at the start but it stopped working. I was still feeling bad anyway, with or without it."

"For me it was misery and fear of being controlled, it was the slavery"

"I loved taking drugs, the feeling… but I lost the ability to be a human being, to do anything. I knew it was quit or die, so that's what I did…"

"It was like a really messy divorce. I couldn't leave the drugs… I relapsed. I just couldn't keep up, I couldn't take it. I was so desperately unhappy and completely stuck, like walking into the same wall every day… I loved it, loved taking drugs… But I couldn't get enough because reality catches up with you, like the boogey man, snapping at my heels"

"I was beginning to get ashamed of the things I was doing… it's very frightening to be that out of control in what you say and do."

"You start using in gangs but you end up on your own… eventually I said 'fuck this shit, this is not for me'. I always knew it wasn't for me: sitting in a field, talking about robberies… 'I don't belong with these scumbags'… I was ashamed, I could never get away with it… wherever I went, people always saw me… I could never run, I was always caught, it just never happened… I was worth more than the life that drugs had to offer me and that there was more to life"

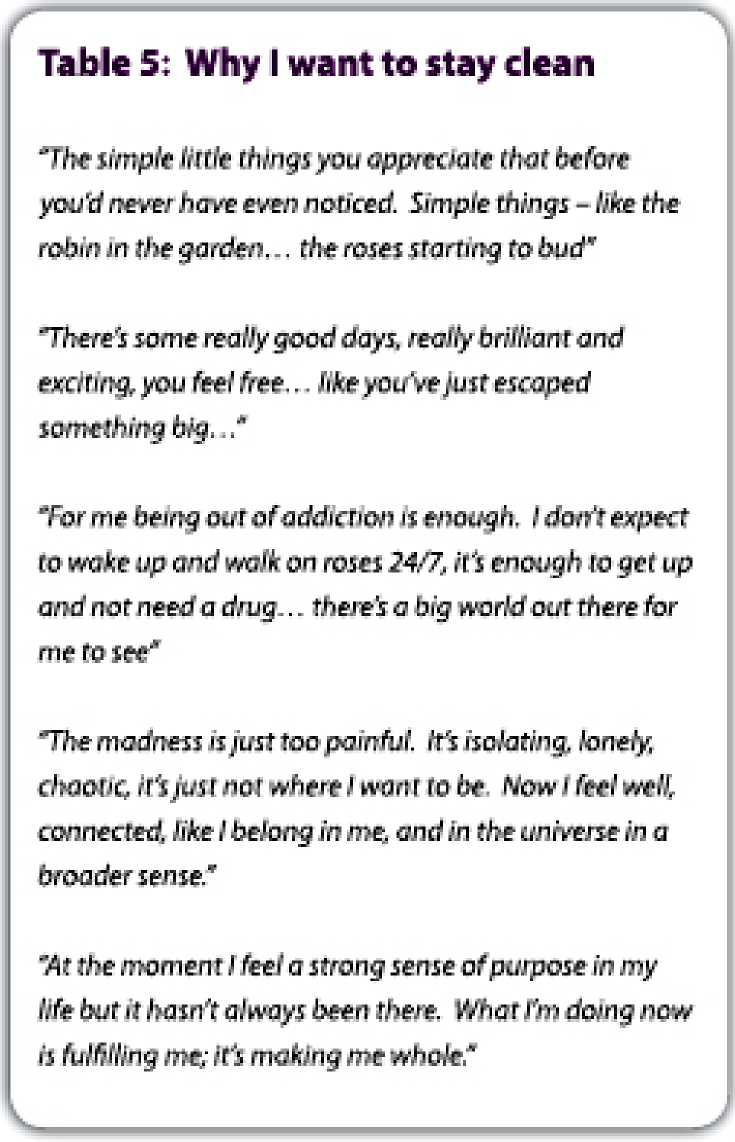


Table 5: Why I want to stay clean

"The simple little things you appreciate that before you'd never have even noticed. Simple things – like the robin in the garden… the roses starting to bud"

"There's some really good days, really brilliant and exciting, you feel free… like you've just escaped something big…"

"For me being out of addiction is enough. I don't expect to wake up and walk on roses 24/7, it's enough to get up and not need a drug… there's a big world out there for me to see"

"The madness is just too painful. It's isolating, lonely, chaotic, it's just not where I want to be. Now I feel well, connected, like I belong in me, and in the universe in a broader sense."

"At the moment I feel a strong sense of purpose in my life but it hasn't always been there. What I'm doing now is fulfilling me; it's making me whole."

Week eight: Staying clean

Agenda:

- Sitting meditation
- Checking in with our emotions
- Developing a recovery blueprint,
- Review original goals and check whether they had been achieved
- Personal learning from this course
- Supports and resources to strengthen mindfulness practice

Week 8

We began with sitting practice, which the group now do with little or no guidance. Afterwards we checked in with how they were feeling and their reactions were as follows: 'Uneasy', 'brilliant', 'grand', 'chilled', 'anxious', 'relaxed', 'complete'.

Recovery blueprint

We systematically went around each person and had them answer three key questions:

1. What made you stop using?
2. What's making you stay clean?
3. What have you learned in this course to help you in recovery?

Tables 4, 5 and 6 give a summary of comments made in answer to these questions.

The members of the group described reaching a point of insight where they experienced that even heavy substance abuse couldn't entirely block out the realities they were trying to escape. And when they realised that there was something more to their life than being a slave to addiction. Their personal stories of turning their lives around were shared with great honesty and emotion. The personal insights they had achieved were the reason they were in this program and a fundamental part of their motivation to learn a new skill and avoid relapse.

Asked why they were continuing to “stay clean”, they described previous relapses and how much they realised that relapse can happen very quickly and destroy whatever life they had built for themselves in recovery. They talked about “fear” as an important element of their motivation to stay clean. Some of them believed that if they relapsed again, there wouldn’t be a “second recovery” in them.

Others focused on how much they would lose (Table 5) if they relapsed. They described the feeling of being free of “something big”; the experience of seeing the world in a new way and feeling they had a place in the world; and the sense that they were now growing in a way that wasn’t possible before.

When asked what they had learned in this course to help them stay clean, many people talked about slowing down and experiencing what was actually happening at any given moment in their life, rather than creating stories about how unsatisfactory life was or how they might dream it could be different. Some referred to feeling more at ease with painful emotions, and how attending to painful feelings had changed these emotions.

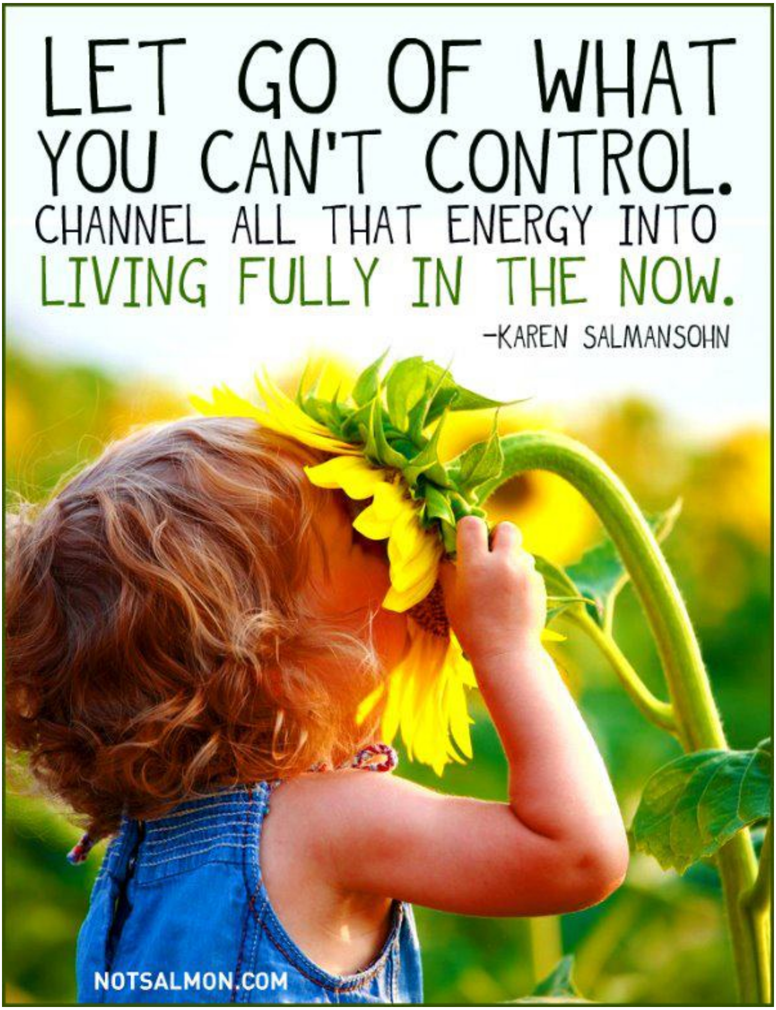
Supporting their practice beyond this course

There was a strong feeling in the group that they wanted to have some opportunity to continue to practice in a group setting. Clive offered to return for an hour each week and lead a sitting meditation for whoever might show up, it would be a simple exercise, with mainly silent practice and not too much discussion.

The team also identified mindfulness classes that were held weekly in the Sanctuary and Orla was happy for any of them to attend her formal Yoga courses in the city centre.

Finale

The group ended with a 10 minute sitting meditation and each participant was encouraged to give themselves credit for having completed the course and to have done their best at all stages throughout.


LET GO OF WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL.
CHANNEL ALL THAT ENERGY INTO
LIVING FULLY IN THE NOW.
-KAREN SALMANSOHN
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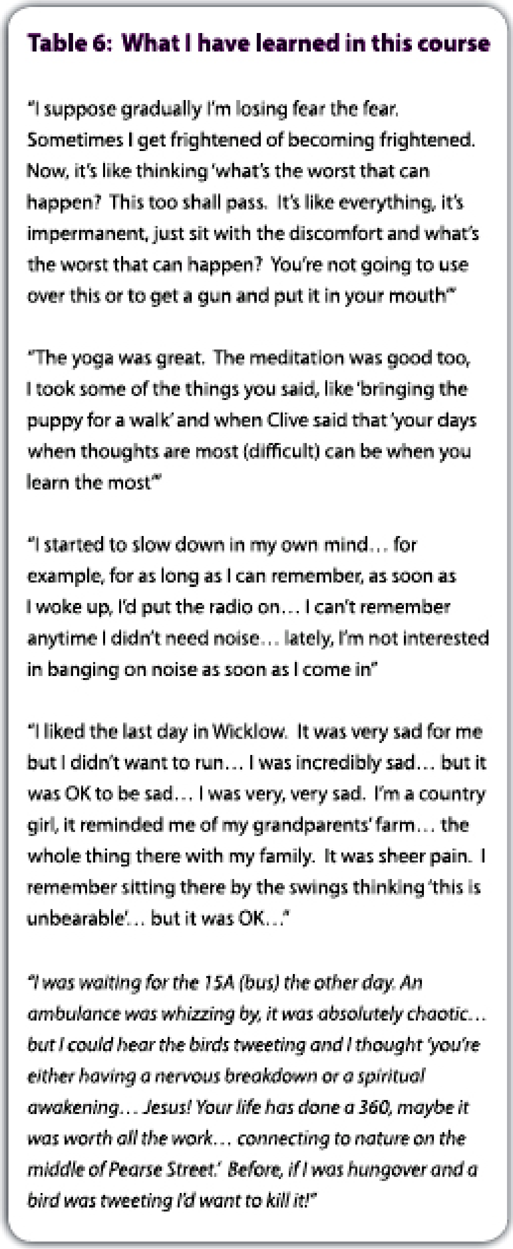

Table 6: What I have learned in this course

"I suppose gradually I'm losing fear the fear. Sometimes I get frightened of becoming frightened. Now, it's like thinking 'what's the worst that can happen? This too shall pass. It's like everything, it's impermanent, just sit with the discomfort and what's the worst that can happen? You're not going to use over this or to get a gun and put it in your mouth"

"The yoga was great. The meditation was good too, I took some of the things you said, like 'bringing the puppy for a walk' and when Clive said that 'your days when thoughts are most (difficult) can be when you learn the most."

"I started to slow down in my own mind… for example, for as long as I can remember, as soon as I woke up, I'd put the radio on… I can't remember anytime I didn't need noise… lately, I'm not interested in banging on noise as soon as I come in"

"I liked the last day in Wicklow. It was very sad for me but I didn't want to run… I was incredibly sad… but it was OK to be sad… I was very, very sad. I'm a country girl, it reminded me of my grandparents' farm… the whole thing there with my family. It was sheer pain. I remember sitting there by the swings thinking 'this is unbearable'… but it was OK…"

"I was waiting for the 15A (bus) the other day. An ambulance was whizzing by, it was absolutely chaotic… but I could hear the birds tweeting and I thought 'you're either having a nervous breakdown or a spiritual awakening… Jesus! Your life has done a 360, maybe it was worth all the work… connecting to nature on the middle of Pearse Street.' Before, if I was hungover and a bird was tweeting I'd want to kill it!"

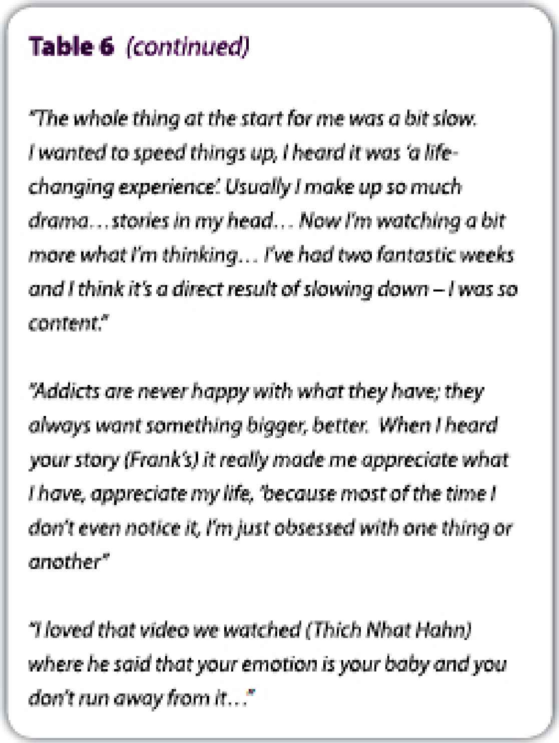

Table 6 *(continued)*

"The whole thing at the start for me was a bit slow. I wanted to speed things up, I heard it was 'a life-changing experience'. Usually I make up so much drama…stories in my head… Now I'm watching a bit more what I'm thinking… I've had two fantastic weeks and I think it's a direct result of slowing down – I was so content."

"Addicts are never happy with what they have; they always want something bigger, better. When I heard your story (Frank's) it really made me appreciate what I have, appreciate my life, 'because most of the time I don't even notice it, I'm just obsessed with one thing or another"

"I loved that video we watched (Thich Nhat Hahn) where he said that your emotion is your baby and you don't run away from it…"

Evaluation of the Deora Program - Qualitative

An analysis of follow up ‘qualitative’ data based on one-to-one interviews two weeks following the course and ‘quantitative’ data based on pre- and post scores on psychometric measures

Two weeks after the Deora mindfulness course ended, one of the team (FS) met with each of the group members on a one-to-one basis and asked them a number of structured questions regarding their individual experiences. She also had each person complete a battery of tests that had also been administered prior to the course beginning.

Although the number of subjects (6) who completed pre- and post-questionnaires is much too small to form any conclusions regarding the impact of mindfulness training on a population in recovery from addiction, there were some interesting findings, which are reported below.

Participant 1

How was the course helpful to you in your recovery?

It got me to recognise that my feelings, good and bad, pass. Like the homework exercise, when we had to write down good and bad feelings and how they pass was great. The good ones made me laugh, the bad ones were hard… noticing the bad feelings passed made me feel guilty that I wasn’t feeling good all the time. The homework helped me deal with it, accept it, ‘I can’t do anything about it’

How could the course have been more helpful to you?

I enjoyed it an awful lot. All of the course really except that sometimes the meditation was a bit long. I thought you (facilitators) were all great. I was delighted and honoured to do it, to be an addict and all! It has helped me to do things; especially the yoga was really helpful. I miss it to tell you the truth.

What was a key moment in your experience of the course?

- One of the major ones was discovering that good and bad feelings go, they pass. Teaching me not to dwell on things, teaching me I'm the problem in my own life. That I think I know better, want to do it my own way…being childish and stubborn.
- The yoga – how you feel with the energy, the total feel good factor from doing that kind of stuff
- Being involved in the group
- Giving me the learning tools to help someone else

What was the most challenging part of the course for you?

The body scan

What impact has the course had on:

(1) How you deal with your addiction and cravings

I've been lucky in that my cravings and compulsions had left me for a good while but this has helped and taught me that they will pass, that they're not me; that feelings are feelings, cravings are cravings. I can do a body scan to check in on where it's coming from, what's my part in this and why I'm letting it come in on me because I've dealt with these things. For me I notice a lot of the time it's to do with hunger

(2) Your relationships with others

When I do it right I give them space to say how they feel. I'd be thoughtful of them, that they have an opinion and a voice

(3) Your relationship with your family

In the same way (as with others) I'm just mindful of them and of myself, that I can fly off the handle and sometimes I need to eat something 'because I get narky when I'm hungry. It's made me more aware. The danger for me is that I go back to my own way, thinking I'm better, that I'm fixed, I'm OK, forgetting my problems

(4) Your work

I'm not working but it gets rid of some of the fear and more into the acceptance of myself… confidence.

How much do you practice mindfulness now?

I know it's good and I feel happier when I do it so if I don't it's me getting in my way again, I'm the problem. About 4-6 times a day I would do 'everyday mindfulness'. Sitting, I try to do 7 days but probably only do 4 or 5. I only do yoga if I have the space and time – twice a week if I'm lucky

Have you had any relapses since beginning the course?

No. Coffee is my only downfall. It makes my brain race a bit but I'm aware of it now

What kind of support would be helpful to you in maintaining your practice?

What Clive is doing – someone to come and sit with me. For me, actually getting out and doing yoga in a course because I fall short sometimes on my own, give in quicker. I'll try keep the meditation and prayer going. Just doing what I know is good and getting involved with other people doing the same – being nice to themselves.

Participant 2

How was the course helpful to you in your recovery?

It was very helpful because it confronted one of the many things you run from as an adult – the mind-body connection, and the spiritual element that's there by default. It confronted it in a gentle way as well. It was very compatible with the 12 steps; it didn't clash in any way with the ideology of the 12 steps.

It would have been a problem if it did… thought, prayers, meditation, conscious contact with yourself… the Mindfulness course did all of that..

[Speaking about the mind-body disconnection that occurs in addiction]

I walked around for 2 years with a shoulder that was out when I was addicted…. I did register the pain, got migraines etc., I felt it severely, but I was still running from it, wouldn't confront it.

The notion of the moment: walking in the moment, brushing your teeth… I feel like I'm doing it as supposed to projecting into the next thing where I'm supposed to be doing, doing what I should be doing. Because usually I've done something before I even start tackling it, my head's gone on to the next problem.

I confronted the notion of slowing down in the moment, confronted as supposed to spoke about it. There's kind of nowhere to go with it – it's confronted in a practical rather than an academic way. He (Tony) spoke of meditation, and the next thing he hits the gongs and you're doing it. Because it can seem very fluffy and intangible otherwise. Learning through doing makes it more challenging in every way.

How could the course have been more helpful to you?

The inclusion of the Body-scan homework at an earlier stage… in the John Kabat-Zinn book it seems to be the basis that you tune in to… it's so hard, it bored me, but that's not the point. It's one of the pillars.

A bit more structure… there were times it was perceived he (Tony) was winging it… I thought 'have you planned for today'?

Things like walking meditation were just put in very quickly at the end… seemed like rushing to the finish line for a while at the end. In Bray, when Clive was doing the 'address the thoughts, then the emotions' we hadn't really prepared enough. It was confusing over what we were meant to be doing… he kept asking 'what now? What next?'… you need to spoon feed for crises! Using cheesy slogans… in your face… simplicity can come in to your head in a crisis. It is ultimately about crisis intervention at times.

Be more forceful about insisting people do their homework, not to criticise, but to out them, you get what you put in There's a responsibility element – people wandering out and in of sessions (although when asked she did not feel we should get overly strict about attendance)

What was a key moment in your experience of the course?

Realising that I don't have my ears constantly shoved with noise… it just happened… I didn't notice for a week. Something's different. I don't need it now, I choose it. The change had happened, I didn't catch it for a few days.

I would try practice the homework; the key thing for me was the absolute unwillingness to do it. All talk and no action is only all talk and no action. I need discipline. It's important for me to recognise that – the observation of my own reluctance.

The day in Wicklow was hard, but hey, I didn't run away from it. I was able to remain in the day.

What was the most challenging part of the course for you?

The discipline aspect around the homework, it still is very challenging. There are days I'd rather watch grass grow than listen to my own breathing. Basically, the practice was the main challenge, not thinking about it, talking etc. The people in the course were lovely. No one put in or out on me. … I found I noticed my own insecurity, that I was worrying about nothing.

What impact has the course had on:

(1) Your addiction and cravings?

A profound impact noticing the thought and leaving it be. Before, I'd need a strategy to make a cup of tea… I'd judge my own thoughts etc.

I was so sick last week, I had a huge desire to get sleeping pills, it would have been no problem but I said no, I'd sit with the discomfort.

It's intercepted the disease in some way. I sat with it. It was horrible, awful, about as far away from the sereneness of yoga as you can get but I was ok.

I'm so much more appreciative of my body sensations. I was so happy to be well after… I encompassed gratitude versus just huge relief and giving a one hour long hour lecture to anyone who would listen on how bad it was.

It intercepted my recovery from a point of view of gratitude and allowing every cell in my body to feel well versus just relieved and retrospective about how lucky I was to survive and all the feelings that go with it.

(2) Your relationships with others?

At times I'm less reactive… I'm more inside of my own body, I'm able to say: 'there's a situation, I have an opinion on it', 9 times out of 10 it's none of my business, it will be a situation I created.

Primarily, I've slowed down. My main difficulty was my relationship with myself, the impact on my relationship with others was an added benefit…

I'm at all times 100% aware that if I'm feeling intolerable or irritable with someone it's usually triggered by something within me. Generally, I'm more chilled out with myself, on a good day. For me it'd be the lifetime achievement award if I can improve my relationship with myself.

(3) Your relationship with your family

My family and I don't have a relationship… my family is a sick entity. The notion of detaching with love, getting in to madness, being a doormat for it or accelerating me… it's down to my role (within the family) and my relationship with myself. I can be rational with anyone else but as soon as I walk in the door at home I'm the sister, the daughter, I'm right back… I've detached… I need to be careful of being around them as they are a trigger. I'm not avoiding them in a diseased way, not running but avoiding them in a self-preservation way – detaching versus avoiding – it's solution based. It's an important distinction, a shift in perception. Avoidance is a mechanism; the perception is I'm not avoiding them for it but detaching for self-preservation. My head's in the solution, not the disease.

(4) Your work/study

Before I was obsessed, went to extremes… should be studying 24 hours a day… one week ago I found myself slipping back to that… I haven't achieved the balance but I'm striving towards it so my head's still in recovery. I used to use a lot of drugs at exam time and I got through, so now I don't have that I've got to use what I have.

How much do you practice mindfulness now?

Generally, when I'm walking… I try to do something in the morning and at bed time… twice or three times a day… I don't take it overly seriously either because you'd hate it

Have you had any relapse since beginning the course?

No

What kind of support would be helpful to you in maintaining your practice?

Practice, to keep connected with it. Post-course strategy, like after care, discuss how to make it work… an after care model… personally, I meditate anyway, I will probably go to the Buddhist Centre, I've got on to Plum Village, I can't do the retreat but they do have a magazine – The Bell… the AA do Grapevine, you use it between meetings to keep it real, because things fade into the background.

My idea is to practice with meditation, get the magazine and try get to Plum Village (Edith is interested in going too). The Dublin Buddhist Centre does groups so I'll touch base with them… I'll try and keep it up. It's like a diet: you know exactly what not to eat but you can always start tomorrow.

Participant 3

How was the course helpful to you in your recovery?

It was helpful in the sense that it helped me to meditate and I'm meant to be doing that for my 11th step.

It's helped me to stay more in the present moment I'm not as stressed because I'm more relaxed and clear headed, not miles ahead or behind (myself)

How could the course have been more helpful to you?

The long body scan at the start could've been shorter, to build things up more gradually. More yoga and to start it earlier in the course The homework – like a journal, you can look over how you've changed during the week, like keeping yourself in check and on the ball… to be aware of your behaviour and how you're reacting so you can change in time before drastic consequences.

What was a key moment in your experience of the course?

I really liked the yoga.
I liked how we chatted about things, the friendly atmosphere; it was never awkward or uneasy.

What was the most challenging part of the course for you?

The long periods of meditation and the body scan… trying to stay mindful without daydreaming.

What impact has the course had on:

(1) Dealing with your addiction and cravings

I'm doing the 11th step so it helped by helping me to meditate, to do the 11th step. It's definitely helped, without a doubt, the combination of both (the 12 steps and the Mindfulness). Tony seems to have a good understanding of the steps.

(2) Your relationship with others

In general I'm a bit more chilled out, calmer. I'm wired naturally but I'm more relaxed… I'm trying not to fly ahead or go into the past because that does affect other people, even if you don't intend it to… This (the benefits) is only if I keep it up.

(3) Your relationship with your family

Similar to my relationship with others (see above)

(4) Your work

N/A

How much do you practice mindfulness now?

Everyday I practice in some way. I haven't done any yoga. I try to do sitting on a daily basis… Walking, not as much, I do more driving meditation! I don't walk much and when I do I'm on a mission.

Have you had any relapses since beginning the course?

No

What kind of support do you need to maintain your practice?

Daily practice

Participant 4

How was the course helpful to you in your recovery?

Not Mindfulness as a whole but the meditation and yoga and the different techniques helped. I don't think I got what the whole Mindfulness thing was.

How could the course have been more helpful to you?

It would be great if you could get an addict to teach it… someone from where they're from (the participants). Frank was inspirational, but you need someone more like them. Mindfulness seems a bit far-fetched. It seemed like the people who were doing it were so far ahead and they were just trying to dumb it down for us… they could have talked more about how they started, their own difficulties in doing it and what helped.

If you got people who weren't that long clean they might be more willing to open up, because myself, I have my own thing, I can be set in my own ways.

People might be more susceptible earlier on. There's a lot done in counselling and addiction, people have heard this all before.

What stage of recovery do you think the course should be offered at?

It's hard to say – it's a bit of a paradox. You need to mix it up.
Did you find the course compatible with the 12 steps?

Yeah, there's a lot that's similar… the only thing that's missing would be talking about a faith

How could the course have been more helpful to you?

More meditation and yoga in the classes, mix it up, not to have a whole class of just talking… do a bit in each class, keep people energised. Some days it seemed a bit like you (team) were winging it.

The homework seemed a bit extreme – 40 minutes is too much (this was the time period each participant was asked to devote daily to completing all the homework assignments, e.g. sitting practice, yoga, writing journal, reading) It's hard enough for people to arrive here every week… at least that's true for myself.

Were there any key moments in the course for you?

To sit up straight doing meditation. My posture was the biggest thing I got out of it, and the yoga.

What was the most challenging aspect of the course?

3 hours a day (for a session) is too long, 2 hours a day would be better

The video (Thich Nhat Than) wasn't believable. I don't want to be like that, it's a bit extreme for someone only getting in to it. You should show more about the benefits of doing it than just, 'here's a man doing it!'

What impact, if any, did the course have on:

(1) Your addiction and cravings

None

(2) Your relationship with others

The meditation slowed me down, I got in to it more

(3) Your relationship with your family

Same (see above)

(4) Your work

Yeah, I work with people so if I'm calmer with myself I'm more approachable and listen more

How much practice are you doing now?

The meditation, and I try to do a bit of yoga. I do one or other each day for 20 minutes… I liked the body scan CD

Have you had any relapse since beginning the course?

No

What kind of supports do you need to maintain your practice?

My CDs and Orla once a week

Participant 5

How was the course helpful to you in your recovery?

I think it disciplined me in to the meditation and helped me to sit with myself more. It was helpful for the meditation end of things, helped me relax, made me more aware of my thoughts and feeling and more aware of me I suppose. I've cried a lot since starting, I actually welcomed it; it was a matter of learning how to cope I suppose. It did leave me vulnerable but it was ok

How could the course have been more helpful to you?

I'm not sure

What was the most challenging aspect of the course for you?

The motivation to turn up was the only thing I found hard, was just to get up and do it.

How did you find the homework?

The writing part… when I walked out the door (after the session) if forgot about it (to do it). But with the CDs I was bringing them home and putting them on, and doing it.

How did you find the CDs?

I like them; I listened to 'From Fear to Fearlessness' at home. The 10 minutes (Tony's guided meditation) is flying now.

Were there any key moments for you on the course?

None that stick out, it was just gradual, I didn't come in one day and think, 'I can do this', it just sort of fell together

What impact, if any, has the course had on:

(1) Your addiction and your cravings

I don't think it has. I know if I get a stressful situation I'll do the 3 minute breathing thing so I suppose that helps and I got home on a bad day, I thought 'I've arrived, I'm home…' so it was taking my mind off what I'm going through. When I joined I didn't think it was about addiction, but that it was a meditation course, so it's not like I didn't get what I was expecting

(2) Your relationships

Maybe it has – not so much on my relationships, but more on me – I've become so much more aware of myself. To deal with what I'm learning about myself but at the same time maintaining my relationships without letting it affect me

(3) Your family

I think I'm able to stay with them a lot more than I was. It used to be half an hour and I'd leave. A few weeks ago I was able to stay for 8 hours. I dunno if that was a result of the course but it was a big change.

(4) Your work/study

I dunno, I finished in the last 4 months. My examiner said I excelled in exams but I dunno if that's why. I did study for them.

How often do you practice?

Everyday for 10 minutes in the morning and then another 15 minutes during the day. I'm trying to do the yoga on my own but I find it very hard.

Have you had any relapses since beginning the course?

No, I have felt like it, thought about it, but it's not what I want.

What kind of supports would be helpful to you in maintaining your practice?

The CDs, discipline to do them and having the time in the morning. I would love to have it (CDs) on MP3.

Follow-up would be good, a follow-up meeting and I plan to come sit with Clive…. I got the number for the meditation centre, I'm definitely going to keep it up.

A lot of hard stuff is coming up but it's all for my own benefit and growth is coming.

When is the right stage in recovery to introduce this course?

The right stage to cope? You don't know if you will be until it comes up, people who dropped out probably weren't there (at the right stage). I knew I needed something else, I'm not getting support in day-to-day counselling to deal with it so I went and organised additional psychotherapy to help.

I don't think there should be a time – one year clean or you're not in – not a time frame. If I'd done this after one month I would've relapsed. Really early recovery isn't a good idea at all. The criteria should be about: the person; what you want to get from this; and that you're going to stay clean at all costs.

Did you feel that we could have done something more to support people feeling vulnerable during the course?

Maybe do raise the issue again after the first session; that you might need extra support. Put it out in some way what to expect, but when it happens it's different

How did this course fit with the 12 steps?

I dropped my sponsor because I found out I didn't value her recovery, she wasn't really there for me… it's her job to guide me through recovery but she didn't call me back (when I had called her in a crisis)… they would run side by side because meditation is the 11th step.

When I heard at the start it would be a life-changing experience, it was like, wow! It was life-changing but it has been in a different way in me than I expected….

Outside stuff – things like how you view yourself, the outside world – it's been life changing in how I see my own awareness. I totally misunderstood, I thought everything would be great, calm and peaceful… it's more of a reality check… I didn't get it but now it's like, this is what they meant. It's all good, growth and change and I'm open to it.

Has the course met your expectations?

I think so, it probably went over it, I did the meditation and yoga, met friends, learnt to sit with myself… I got more out of it than I expected.

Where to from here?

I definitely want to keep it up; I would love to partake in the next course (in some way)

Participant 6

(part of the interview is missing as the transcription was lost)

How was the course helpful to you in your recovery?

Very. The information… I was practicing a bit of meditation before so it confirms that and gives me motivation.

It's very simple, not a complex thing, but sometimes I worry if I'm doing it right I think it's going to prove itself over time versus getting a huge dramatic result, but I expect it's going to help me a huge amount… it's a process, you evolve with the process

How could the course have been more helpful?

At the start, the body scan, the length of it put me off. Initially it was too slow but introductions have to be made, settling down other than that was great.

Were there any key moments for you during the course?

I remember feeling 'oh yeah, this is it at one stage', I felt high, brilliant, but it didn't last. One thing important to say is that I was on Prozac, when I started, now I'm not. I'm kind of stepping up to life. I'll try it, if it doesn't work I'll go back – I said it to my counsellor.

I'm more enthusiastic about life

Something we did with Clive – the Pema Chodron CD was fantastic, I had heard it before but it made more sense to me. She was talking about "Maitri".

How often do you practice now?

Daily

Evaluation of the Deora Program – Quantative

Method

Individuals who voluntarily participated in the 10-week MBRP program completed a range of quantitative assessments pre- and post-course. The goal of this study was to measure the impact of participating in a 10-week MBRP program on participants' psychological functioning, quality of life and mindful qualities. Due to the sample size, lack of a control group, and lack of controlling for the level of pre-existing substance abuse on outcomes, it is not feasible to generalise from these results.

However, when taken together with the qualitative feedback from participants, the results offer tentative suggestions on the potential of applying Mindfulness-based approaches to support people recovering from addiction.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited for interview from local rehabilitation services on the basis of a referral from their key worker. Over 100 individuals were referred for interview. Selection criteria for interview included the applicant demonstrating an interest in learning more about mindfulness, and being drug-free (including methadone) for at least six months.

Nineteen individuals were selected for interview, 15 of whom were accepted to participate in the program.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out by the Program Director TB (Clinical Psychologist) and an assistant FS (psychology graduate). The questions were tailored to establish brief background knowledge of the applicants, including their history of substance abuse, psychological history, treatment history and current treatment. The interview also explored any previous experience with meditation and their reason for interest in the program. Exclusion criteria for proceeding to participate in the program included the individual reporting symptoms of current distress and the absence of a supportive relationship with a key worker.

On the basis of these interviews, 15 participants were selected to voluntarily participate in the 10-week MBRP program.

Analyses

Participants were required to give their written consent to take part and to complete a series of quantitative assessments one-week prior to beginning the program. One-week after completing the program, participants were required to complete a post-course assessment. There was no control group in this study.

The assessments used were the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS 21), The Life Orientation Test – Revised (Lot – R, Sheirer, Carver & Bridges), Resilience Scale (RS), World Health Organisation Quality of Life (WHOQOL-Bref), Kentucky Inventory Mindfulness Scale (Kims, Baer) and the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale (CAMS-R, Feldman).

Of the 15 participants who began the program, nine completed it. However, the current data analyses include only the participants who completed both the pre- and post-course assessments. The final sample size was seven participants, this sample size is too small to have statistical power therefore results cannot be generalised.

Participants

Fifteen participants entered the MBRP program, six were male and nine were female ranging in age from 28 – 48 years (M = 33.8, SD = 5.95). All of the participants had a history of multiple addictions, length of use ranged from 6 – 24 years (M = 15.5, SD = 5.95). Two of the participants' addictions were limited to alcohol and prescription medication, eight had a history of abusing multiple Class A drugs such as speed, ecstasy, heroin and crack cocaine. Data regarding the history of drug use was missing for 3 participants.

Three participants had spent time in prison. None of the participants were using illicit drugs or alcohol at the onset of the program. One participant reported taking prescribed anti-depressants at the onset.
All of the participants were currently working through the 12 step program, and they were all receiving support from a sponsor, a key

worker or a counsellor. Six participants had previous experience of meditation, three of whom practiced on a regular basis. None of the participants had any previous experience of mindfulness training. Two participants had a primary school education or less, six had a secondary school education, and six had completed tertiary education. One participant was in full-time employment, two were unemployed, one was in vocational training, and five were students.

Independent sample t-tests revealed no significant differences between baseline assessments of participants who completed the program (n=7) and those who did not (n=8). One-tailed paired samples t-tests compared means of participants' pre- and post course assessments.

Improvements were found in participants' self reported level of psychological functioning, quality of life and mindful qualities. However, not all of these improvements reached statistical significance. This may have been due to a lack of statistical power in the data set due to the small sample size (n=7).

Participants showed significant improvements in their quality of life relating to their social relations and their satisfaction with their environment. The most substantial improvement they reported was in their social relations. There was a trend toward improved physical and psychological functioning however it did not reach statistical significance.

Neither of the mindfulness scales used detected a significant improvement in participants' mindful qualities, however, there was a trend toward an improvement. Participants did report significant improvement in three of the fours subscales of the KIMS. The greatest improvement was in their ability to act with awareness; they also reported improvement in their ability to observe their thoughts and feelings and to act without judgement.

They reported a slight improvement in their ability to describe their thoughts and feelings; however this improvement was not significant.

The results indicated a trend toward improvement in participants' optimism and resilience, however changes were not found to be significant.

Participants self-reported significant reductions in their levels of stress, anxiety and depression after taking part in the course.

Discussion

Given the small sample size and the lack of a control group in this study all results must be interpreted cautiously. A sample of seven participants does not allow for the statistical power necessary to draw any firm conclusions regarding the usefulness of MBRP for individuals recovering from multiple and enduring addictions. Moreover, the lack of follow-up data impedes us from determining whether any gains achieved through the course were maintained in the months after completion. Therefore, we cannot generalise from these results, however, we can take encouragement from tentative evidence of the benefits of MBRP reported in this pilot study. When taken together with the qualitative data collected throughout the course of the study, and with previous research that has been carried out on MBRP internationally, it can be concluded that the use of MBRP in supporting people recovering from addiction shows promise and warrants further research.

The analyses revealed improvements in participants' self-reported levels of psychological functioning, quality of life, levels of optimism, resilience and mindful qualities. Not all of these results were statistically significant, however all showed trends toward improvement in the expected direction. The most significant improvements found in all the scales were in their ability to accept their thoughts and feelings and in their satisfaction with their social relationships. This suggests the use of MBRP may benefit people recovering from multiple and enduring addictions.

It is interesting to note that neither of the overall scores on the two mindfulness scales reached statistical significance. Yet the KIMS detected significant improvement in participants' mindful qualities. This suggests that participants were better able to observe their thoughts and feelings, to act with awareness and to accept without judgement after taking part in the course. However, their ability to describe their thoughts and feelings was not significantly improved as a result. They reported a greater ability to practice core mindfulness skills, while still having difficulty in articulating their thoughts and feelings. While no causation can be inferred, their increased ability to accept their own thoughts and feelings is likely to have aided them in their ability to be more tolerant of others, and to be more sensitive to the results of their own behaviour. This would fit well with their increased satisfaction in social relationships that was found both quantitatively ($p=.2$) and reported in qualitative feedback.

There was a trend toward improvement in participants' self-reported quality of life, this was most notable in their satisfaction with their social relationships and their physical environment. This finding is compatible with their improved ability to accept without judgement which they reported. While no causation can be inferred, this finding suggests they may have applied this mindful quality to better accept their relationships with others and their physical environment. Participants reported slight improvement in their psychological and physical functioning, however neither of these was significant.

The lack of significant improvement in psychological functioning is in keeping with the lack of significant improvement of optimism or resilience. This suggests that the course did not significantly improve protective factors relating to mental health. However, the DASS-21 detected significant reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression suggesting a decrease in participants' experiences of negative psychological states.

Summary and recommendations

This 8-week course was an exploration of the value of mindfulness training to the complex process of recovering from an addiction and staying "clean". It was never presented as a grand solution to the problem of addiction, but as an adjunct to a range of therapies and programs from which the participants had already benefited.

Meditation of any kind is not an easy subject to explain. The experience of practice, rather than any number of explanations or descriptions is what allows an individual to grasp for themselves what it means.

As a result those who have limited or no experience of meditation often hold many misconceptions about it. Thirteen adults began the course and seven were still there at the final meeting. Of those who dropped out early on, we know that some of them found returning to the drug service for a weekly course was itself upsetting as they preferred to think they had left all that behind them. Two reported that they found it hard to be in a room "full of addicts" after being successfully clean for a long time. These are issues that we would anticipate and address more rigorously in any future selection process.

It may be that if an individual has successfully stayed clean away from the ethos of a drug counselling service, then their introduction to mindfulness training should be in some very neutral location where there is no special focus on addiction.

Of those who completed the course, all reported that they found it that mindfulness made sense to them, and that it had strengthened them in their recovery.

Only one individual reported that he still didn't "get mindfulness" by the end of the course.

Due to constraints in the design and sample size of the quantitative study, we cannot draw any firm conclusions on the benefits of applying mindfulness to relapse prevention. However, the results were encouraging and clearly indicate that further research in this area is warranted.

Overall the participants appreciated those experiences of mindfulness which were facilitated by different course exercises. As one participant said: "He (TB) spoke of meditation, and the next thing he hits the gong and you're doing it. Because it can seem very fluffy and intangible otherwise. Learning through doing makes it more challenging in every way."

From the earliest session, short simple introductory exercises were used to keep the teaching sessions experiential and avoid prolonged conceptual debate. Furthermore, the early sessions focused on basic exercises that involved the body, as a way of helping people to reconnect with their bodies and become thereby grounded in the present moment. Exercises such as the body Scan and Hatha yoga stretches were particularly successful in bringing participants into mindful awareness of the present moment. Many identified yoga as the most helpful aspect of the 8-week program, but it's probably the case that no one of theses exercises stands alone. The mix may be critical, and the timing of how each exercise is introduced remains an open and important question.

What was striking was that each participant reported that they were practicing daily, - generally a 10- 15 minute sitting meditation - in the follow up interviews.

What didn't work well in this group was having participants do a long body scan exercise early on. This was simply the result of our choice to use Jon Kabat-Zinn's pre-recorded 45 minute guided CD on body scan. This is a very useful resource, but if we were to repeat this course we would want to provide participants with a 15-20 body scan exercise, preferably recorded by one of the group leaders.

Perhaps their practice could evolve in time into a longer, fuller Body Scan.

Another learning was the need to introduce Yoga much earlier on, probably from the opening session. Due to the unavailability of our yoga teacher until week 3, we were not able to introduce this component of the program until the group was up and running. One participant reported that he didn't feel he "got what the whole mindfulness thing was". As he put it: "Mindfulness seems a bit far-fetched. It seemed like the people who were doing it were so far ahead and they were just trying to dumb it down for us… they could have talked more about how they started, their own difficulties in doing it and what helped…it would be great if you could get an addict to teach it".

Our hope would be that through this report, the concept of mindfulness will be brought alive, off the pages of text book definitions, by conveying the participants' own experience of practicing mindfulness, of their struggles as well as their gains.

One thing that definitely came through is that it's not easy. In the words of one participant "there are days I'd rather sit and watch grass grow than listen to my own breathing". We would hope that their words and their stories will go some way to 'de-mystifying' mindfulness for people who may be interested in participating in future. In addition, we would hope that some of the participants will eventually go on to train in mindfulness themselves and teach future programs. Two of the participants were exploring the possibility of going on a mindfulness retreat in Plum Village at the time of the follow-up interviews which was encouraging in this regard.

The impact of mindfulness that was most relevant to this group is that it taught them to be less afraid of stopping and being with their experience, however easy or difficult it was, in the here and now.

Participants described in various ways how they had learned to stop running form the present, through distractions of one sort or another and to simply be with themselves. They discovered their reason for running was a fear of being overwhelmed by some feeling they had if they were to acknowledge its presence. However, they discovered for themselves that the effect of trying to run from, or suppress, negative feelings was to leave them feeling permanently on edge and therefore vulnerable to returning to addictive behaviours that had helped them avoid feelings in the past.

Playing the DVD of Thich Nhat Hanh on "Coping with Emotional Storms" seems to have been especially helpful to all participants, bar one in the group. The message contained in this talk was simple: Our feelings are not our enemy, they are a part of us that needs care and attention. And that if we stay present to our feelings they naturally transform and pass. For each participant, different feelings may cause distress and threaten to overwhelm them.

In this course we focused on painful emotions like hurt, sadness, anger. I think in future courses we would recommend focussing on feelings and urges broadly fitting the description of "cravings" which can arise in the presence or absence of distress. This is an aspect of relapse prevention that has been very well developed by Alan Marlatt. For this reason (and many other good reasons) we would recommend making contact with Marlatt and his Colleagues in Seattle Washington, seeking permission to incorporate his exercises for "coping with urges and cravings".

In the light of our experience in this program we would recommend focusing on cravings early on in any mindfulness training course. We had the good fortune to attend a two day training event in Copenhagen with Alan Marlatt but we were already at week seven so that it was too late to incorporate his insights into this program. One of the differences between the program we ran and Marlatt's program is that he gets straight on to the issue of cravings in the first session tailoring it around addiction specifically from the outset.

Marlatt and his colleagues use a lot of metaphors in their program. For example, they offered a variety of metaphors to give participants easy ways to observe their thoughts e.g. imagine your thoughts as leaves on a river floating along; or clouds in the sky floating past and dissolving; or as if you're sitting in the cinema watching the words/thoughts on the screen. They also used the imagery of a pig to help participants to externalise their cravings and gain control over them. e.g. imagine your craving as a greedy pig, the more you feed it, the stronger it gets.

We believe incorporating the creative elements to the course would be helpful in future programs as participants need strong associations with simple messages to get them through crises. As one of the participants on our course put it:: "You need to be spoon fed for crises! Using cheesy slogans… in your face… simplicity can come in to your head in a crisis. It is ultimately about crisis intervention at times."

Marlatt and his research group have just embarked on a major study of the benefits of mindfulness training in the treatment of addiction. It may be very useful for future programs to establish formal contact with his group and explore possibility of using the same training and research evaluation protocol. That way learnings on both sides of the Atlantic could be shared and data also.

Another striking feature of Marlatt's program is that they accept anyone on to the program that was referred by the local rehabilitation services. They did not exclude people taking methadone, very violent offenders or people experiencing psychotic episodes.

As Alan Marlatt himself stated when questioned on this policy at the workshop in Copenhagen: "My position is that anyone can benefit from this. If they're not getting anything out of it they can drop out. They can always give it a try"

Overall, this was a very enjoyable experience for all of us who worked on this program, and, by all accounts, for the participants themselves. This is not an insignificant observation. We have heard reports of patients in certain mindfulness courses who found the program very "heavy going". Basically, the aim of mindfulness is to open our minds and hearts to an appreciation of the present, and to an experience of gratitude for simply being alive at all. When I attend Plum Village, the monastery of Thich Nhat Hahn in the south of France, what strikes me is that this practice is one which gives people a sense of joy and well being. And that if it doesn't, one is probably trying too hard, or simply approaching it with the wrong attitude.

It seems only logical that if we can present mindfulness training with a lightness of touch, and with a sense of joy, in our courses, the likelihood of sustained practice afterwards will be much greater.

6 Week Introductory Course In Mindfulness Meditation

1st Week – Mindfulness of Breathing

by Gil Fronsdal

Source:

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Insight meditation, or Vipassana, is one of the central teachings of the Buddha. It has continued as a living practice for 2500 years. At the heart of insight meditation is the practice of mindfulness, the cultivation of clear, stable and non-judgmental awareness. While mindfulness practice can be highly effective in helping bring calm and clarity to the pressures of daily life, it is also a spiritual path that gradually dissolves the barriers to the full development of our wisdom and compassion.

During the six-week introductory course, the basic instructions in insight meditation are given sequentially, each week building on the previous one.

- The first week focuses on the basics of meditation and on mindfulness of breathing.
- The second week discusses mindfulness of the body and expands the area of attention to include all our physical experiences.
- The third week introduces mindfulness of emotions,
- The fourth week mindfulness of thinking,

- The fifth week mindfulness of mind, and the sixth week focuses on the role of mindfulness in daily life and in deepening one's spiritual life.

Insight meditation is nothing more mysterious than developing our ability to pay attention to our immediate experience. We are often pre-occupied with thoughts about the past or the future or with fantasies. While sometimes such pre-occupations may be innocent and harmless, more often they contribute to stress, fear and suffering. Mindfulness practice is learning how to overcome pre-occupation so that we can see clearly what is happening in our lived experience of the present. In doing so, we find greater clarity, trust, and integrity. Mindfulness relies on an important characteristic of awareness: awareness by itself does not judge, resist, or cling to anything. By focusing on simply being aware, we learn to disentangle ourselves from our habitual reactions and begin to have a friendlier and more compassionate relationship with our experience, with ourselves and with others.

Mindfulness is the practice of being attentively present. It is called a practice in the same way that we say that people practise the piano. Being attentive is a skill that grows with practice. It develops best if we set aside any self-conscious judgements or expectations of how our meditation is developing. The practice is simply to relax and bring forth an awareness of what is happening in the present. In order both to develop the skill and experience the joys of non-reactive presence, a daily meditation practice is helpful.

Mindfulness of Breathing

Insight Meditation usually begins with awareness of breathing. This is an awareness practice, not an exercise in breathing; there is no need to adjust the breathing in any way. We simply attend to the breath, getting to know it as it is: shallow or deep, long or short, slow or fast, smooth or rough, coarse or refined, constricted or loose. When we get distracted by thoughts or emotions, we simply return to the physical sensations of the breath.

Because of the mind's tendency to be scattered and easily distracted, we use the breath as a kind of anchor to the present. When we rest in the breath, we are countering the strong forces of distraction. We train the mind, heart, and body to become settled and unified on one thing, at one place, at one time. If you are sitting in meditation and your mind is on what you did at work today, then your mind and body are not in the same place at the same time. Fragmented this way, we all too easily lose touch with a holistic sense of ourselves.

Mindfulness of breathing is a powerful ally in our lives. With steady awareness of our inhalations
and exhalations, the breath can become an equi-animous constant through the ups and downs of our daily life. Resting with, even enjoying, the cycles of breathing, we are less likely to be caught up in the emotional and mental events that pass through us. Repeatedly returning to the breath can be a highly effective training in letting go of the identification and holding which freeze the mind and heart. It also develops concentration.

Exercises for the first week

You will get the most benefit from this course if you engage yourself with the practice during the week between our class meetings. During the first week please try the following three practices:

1) Sit one twenty-minute session of meditation each day. For this first week, focus on staying aware of your breath as described in the next section of the handout. Begin and end each sitting with, a minute of conscious reflection: At the start, clearly remind yourself that you are about to devote yourself to being mindful and present. Consciously let go of any concerns, remembering that you will have plenty of time to take them up again later. At the end, reflect on what happened during your meditation session.

There is no need to judge what happened; you just want to strengthen your mindfulness through a brief exercise in recollection.

2) Choose one routine physical activity that you perform most days and experiment with doing it mindfully. This means doing just this one activity while you are doing the exercise - not listening to the radio at the same time, for example. It is also best to let go of any concern about the results or in finishing quickly. Remain in the present as best you can. When the mind wanders, simply come back to the activity. Activities you might choose include brushing your teeth, washing the dishes, or some routine act of driving or walking.

3) For one half-hour period during the week, maintain some regular attention of your posture as you go about with some normal activity. Without straining, assume a posture that is alert and upright. Notice what happens to your mood, thoughts, feelings, presence, and degree of mindfulness as you do this exercise.

Breathing Meditation 1 (Kabat-Zinn 1996)

Assume a comfortable posture lying on your back or sitting. If you are sitting, keep the spine straight and let your shoulders drop.

Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.

Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in-breath and fall or recede on the out-breath.

Keep your focus on the breathing, „being with" each in-breath for its full duration and with each out-breath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.

Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.

If your mind wanders away from the breath a thousand times, then your job is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with.

Practise this exercise for fifteen minutes at a convenient time every day, whether you feel like it or not, for one week and see how it feels to incorporate a disciplined meditation practice into your life. Be aware of how it feels to spend some time each day just being with your breath without having to do anything.

Breathing Meditation 2 (Kabat-Zinn 1996)

- Tune into your breathing at different times during the day, feeling the belly go through one or two risings and fallings.
- Become aware of your thoughts and feelings at these moments, just observing them without judging them or yourself.
- At the same time, be aware of any changes in the way you are seeing things and feeling about yourself.

Meditation instruction: Mindfulness of breathing

Sit in a comfortable but alert posture. Gently close your eyes. Take a couple of deep breaths, and, as you exhale, settle into your body, relaxing any obvious tension or holding. Then, breathing normally, bring your awareness to your body, sensing for a short while how the body presents itself to you. There is no particular way to be; just notice how you are at this moment.

Then, from within the body, as part of the body, become aware of your breathing, however it happens to appear. There is no right or wrong way to breathe while doing mindfulness practice; the key is to simply notice how it actually is right now. Let the breath breathe itself, allowing it to be received in awareness. Notice where in your body you feel the breath most clearly. This may be the abdomen rising and falling, the chest expanding and contracting, or the tactile sensations of the air passing through the nostrils or over the upper lip. Wherever the breath tends to appear most clearly, allow that area to be the home, the centre of your attention.

Keep your attention connected with the inhalations and exhalations, sensing the physical sensations that characterize them. Let go of the surface concerns of the mind. Whenever the mind wanders away, gently come back to the breath. There is no need to judge the wandering mind; when you notice that the mind has wandered, simply return to the breath without evaluation.

To help maintain contact between awareness and the breath, you may use a label or mental note. Softly, like a whisper in the mind, label the in-breath and out-breath, encouraging the awareness to stay present with the breath. You can label the inhalations and exhalations as "in" and "out," or perhaps use "rising" and "falling" for the movement of the abdomen or the chest. Don't worry about finding the right word, just use something that will help you stay connected.

There is no need to force the attention on the breath; to strengthen your ability to become mindful and present, use the gentle power of repeatedly, non judgmentally returning and resting with the breath.

Sources:

Insight Meditation Centre – 108 Birch St., Redwood City, Ca 94062 - (650) 599-3456
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2nd Week – Mindfulness of the Body

by Gil Fronsdal

Mindfulness of breathing is a wonderful beginning to cultivating awareness. It strengthens our ability to concentrate and steadies the attention on our present moment experience. It also weakens our tendency to get lost in reactive emotions and mental preoccupations. With time, attention to the breath helps us to develop a clear, non-reactive awareness that can then be turned to the full range of our human experience. As mindfulness develops, we begin to bring this awareness to other areas of our lives.

Mindfulness is an embodied practice. By practicing mindfulness, we learn to live in and through our bodies. Learning to be mindful of bodily experiences is one of the most useful aspects of mindfulness. It is much easier have a balanced, healthy awareness of the rest of our lives when we are in touch with our immediate physical experience.

During this week we expand the practice to include the body.

Many people ignore their bodies. The busier a person's life, the easier it is to discount the importance of staying in touch with how the body feels. Many people may be attentive to their body, but it is from the outside in; that is, they are concerned about body image and appearance. Mindfulness of the body is attention from the inside out. We notice what the body is feeling, in and of itself. We give a generous amount to time to be with the felt sense of the body. Not only does this help the body relax, remaining mindful of the body is a safeguard from getting wound up with mental preoccupations.

Benefits of mindfulness of the body

Mindfulness of the body has several benefits. First, cultivating mindfulness of the body increases our familiarity with our bodies and with how the body responds to our inner and outer lives, to our thoughts and emotions, and to events around us. The Buddha saw the human mind and body as unified.

When we suppress or ignore aspects of our emotional, cognitive, and volitional lives, we tend also to disconnect from the body, from the physical manifestations of our experience. Conversely, when we distance ourselves from our physical experience, we lose touch with our inner life of emotions and thoughts. The awakening of the body from within that comes with mindfulness can help us to discover, not only our repressed emotions, but also, more importantly, a greater capacity to respond to the world with healthy emotions and motivations.

Second, in cultivating mindfulness we are developing non-reactivity, including the ability to be present for our experience without turning away, habitually seeking or resisting change, or clinging to pleasant and avoiding unpleasant experience. All too often, our automatic desires, aversions, preferences, and judgments interfere with our ability to know what is actually happening. Learning to not respond automatically and unconsciously makes possible a deeper understanding of the present moment and our reaction to it, and gives us more freedom to choose our response. Being non-reactively present for our physical experience goes a long way in learning to do so with the rest of our lives.

Last, but not least, mindfulness of physical sensations helps us both to relax tension and to understand its causes.

Mindfulness Exercises For The Second Week

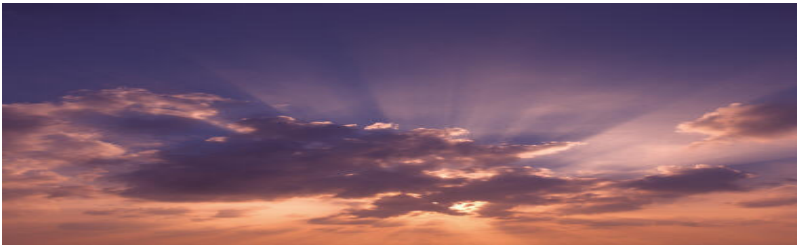
1. Continue your daily twenty-minute meditation session.

2. In the midst of your regular activities, devote two one-hour periods during the week to being mindful of your body. During this time, perhaps using a timer or some other cue to remind yourself, periodically check in with your body, maybe every five minutes or so. Notice, in particular, your shoulders, stomach, face, and hands. If you find tension in any of these places, relax.

3. Devote one meal to eating slowly and mindfully, paying attention to the tastes, textures, temperature, and other qualities of your food, and to the experience of your body eating. (When does your body tell you that have had enough?) If possible, take the meal in silence, with no other activities to distract you. You might want to put down your spoon or fork between bites.

Whenever your mind wanders, or whenever you get caught up in reactions to what is happening, relax and come back to the simplicity of eating mindfully.

4. Start noticing when, how and by what, your attention becomes distracted or fragmented. Are there any common themes or patterns in the kinds of thoughts, feelings, activities, or preoccupations where your mindfulness disappears? If you discover any, discuss what you find with somebody: a friend, relative, or colleague.



Meditation instruction: mindfulness of the body

During meditation, centre your awareness primarily on the physical sensations of breathing.

With dedication, but without strain, keep the breath in the foreground of attention. The idea is to be relaxed and receptive while alert and attentive. As long as other experiences such as bodily sensations, sounds, thoughts, or feelings are in the background of your awareness, allow them to remain there while you rest your attention with the sensations of breathing.

When a strong physical sensation makes it difficult for you to stay with the breath, simply switch your awareness to this new predominant experience. The art of mindfulness is recognizing what is predominant and then sustaining an intimate mindfulness on whatever that is. When the mind wanders and you lose the mindful connection with the sensation, gently and without judgment return your attention to the physical sensation.

As if your entire body was a sensing organ, sense or feel the physical experience. Simply allow it to be there. Drop whatever commentary or evaluations you may have about the experience in favour of seeing and sensing the experience directly in and of itself. Carefully explore the particular sensations that make it up - hardness or softness, warmth or coolness, tingling, tenseness, pressure, burning, throbbing, lightness, and so on. Let your awareness become as intimate with the experience as you can.

Notice what happens to the sensations as you are mindful of them. Do they become stronger or weaker, larger or smaller, or do they stay the same?

As an aid to both acknowledging the physical experience and sustaining your focus, you can ever so softly label the experience. The labelling is a gentle, ongoing whisper in the mind that keeps the attention steady on the object of mindfulness. You should primarily sense directly the experience and what happens to it as you are present for it.

Be alert for when the focus of your attention moves from the physical sensations to your reactions to the sensations and your thoughts about them. If this happens move your attention back to the felt-sense of the sensations. Try to keep yourself independent of whatever thoughts and reactions you have. Relax.

Once a physical sensation has disappeared or is no longer compelling, you can return to mindfulness of breathing until some other sensation calls your attention.

3rd Week – Mindfulness of Emotions:

by Gil Fronsdal

No Hard Feelings.

In mindfulness practice we keep our attention on the breath, unless some other experience is so strong as to pull us away from the breath; then we turn our attention to that other experience. One kind of experience that can pull us away is physical sensations, which we talked about last week; another is emotions.

No emotion is inappropriate within the field of mindfulness practice. We are not trying to avoid emotions, or to have some kinds of emotions and not others. We are trying to allow them to exist as they arise, without the additional complications of judgement, evaluation, preferences, aversion, desires, clinging, resistance or other reactions.

The Buddha once asked, "If a person is struck by an arrow, is that painful?" Yes. The Buddha then asked, "If the person is struck by a second arrow, is that even more painful?" Of course. He went on to say, that as long as we are alive, we can expect painful experiences - the first arrow. Often the significant suffering associated with an emotion is not the emotion itself, but the way we relate to it. If we condemn, judge, hate, or deny the first arrow, that is like being struck by a second arrow. The second arrow is optional, and mindfulness helps us avoid it.

An important part of mindfulness practice is investigating our relationships to our emotions. Do we cling to them? Do we hate them? Are we ashamed of them? Do we tense around them? Are we afraid of how we are feeling? Do we measure our self-worth by the presence or absence of an emotion? Can we simply leave an emotion alone?

Mindfulness itself does not condemn or condone any particular emotional reaction. Rather, it is the practice of honestly being aware of what happens to us and how we react to it. The more aware and familiar we are with our reactions, the easier it will be to have, for example, uncomplicated grief or straightforward joy, not mixed up with the second arrows of guilt, anger, remorse, embarrassment, or judgement. Emotional maturity comes, not from the absence of emotions, but from seeing them clearly.

Mindfulness helps us to be as we are without further complications. If we can be accepting of ourselves in this way, then it is much easier to know how to respond appropriately with choice rather than habit.

How to Attend to Emotions

Generally, during meditation, keep yourself centred on the breath. If there are emotions in the background, leave them there; keep the breath in the foreground of awareness as if it were the fulcrum for your experience.

When an emotion becomes compelling enough to make it difficult to stay with the breath, then bring it into the focus of meditative awareness.

There are four aspects to the mindfulness of emotions. You don't have to practise all four each time you focus on an emotion. At different times, each is appropriate. Experiment to see how each can help in developing a non-reactive attention to emotions.

The four are:

Recognition: A basic principle of mindfulness is that you cannot experience freedom and spaciousness unless you recognize what is happening. The more you learn to recognize the range of your emotions, including the most subtle, the more you will become familiar and comfortable with them, and the less you will be in their thrall.

Naming: A steady and relaxed labeling of the emotion of the moment, e.g., "joy," "anger," "frustration," "happiness", "boredom," "contentment", "desire," and the like, encourages us to stay present with what is central in our experience. Naming can also help us become calm and less entangled with the emotion, less identified with it or reactive to its presence.

Acceptance: This does not mean condoning or justifying certain feelings. It means simply allowing emotions to be present, whatever they may be. Many people frequently judge and censure their feelings. Formal meditation practice offers us the extraordinary opportunity to practise unconditional acceptance of our emotions. This does not mean expressing emotion, but letting emotions move through you without any inhibitions, resistance, or encouragement.

Investigation: This entails dropping any fixed ideas we have about an emotion and looking at it afresh. Emotions are composite events, made up of bodily sensations, thoughts, feelings, motivations, and attitudes. Investigation is not analysis, but more a sensory awareness exercise of feeling our way into the present moment experience of the emotions. It is particularly useful to investigate the bodily sensations of an emotion, letting the body be the container for the emotion,. In a sense, the body is a bigger container than the thinking mind which is easily exhausted, and which tends to spin off into stories, analysis, and attempts to fix the situation - away from acceptance of the present moment experience.

Mindfulness exercises for the third week

1. Lengthen your daily meditation session to 25 minutes. When you first sit down, notice the main concerns, feelings, physical sensations that may be pre-occupying you. Acknowledge them and remain attentive to any tendency to become lost in your thoughts concerning these experiences. Meditation proceeds easiest when we are willing to suspend - for the duration of the meditation - the need to think about anything.

2. At least once during the week "ride out an emotion." Sometime during the week when you are feeling a strong desire, aversion, fear, or other emotion, don't act on the feeling. Rather, bring your mindfulness to the feeling and observe the changes it undergoes while you are watching it. You might choose to sit, stand or walk around quietly while you do this study. Things to notice are the various body sensations and tensions, the changes in the feeling's intensity, the various attitudes and beliefs that you have concerning the presence of the emotion, and perhaps any more primary emotion triggering the feeling. If after a time the emotion goes away, spend some time noticing what its absence feels like.

3. Spend part of a day making a concentrated effort to notice feelings of happiness, contentment, wellbeing, joy, pleasure, and ease. Even if your day is primarily characterized by the opposite of these, see if you can identify even subtle and seemingly insignificant moments of these positive states. It can be as simple as appreciating the texture of a doorknob or a flash of ease in your eyes as you notice the blue sky after the fog has burned off. This is not an exercise for manufacturing positive states but rather discovering that these may be much more a part of your life than your preoccupations allow you to notice.

4. Spend part of another day noticing which feelings tend to pull you into a state of preoccupation. Sometimes there are patterns in the kinds of feelings that lead to becoming lost in thoughts. Common sources for distraction are desire, aversion, restlessness, fear, and

doubt. Are any of these more common for you than the others? What is your relationship to these feelings when they appear? As you notice the patterns, does that change how easily you get pulled into their orbit? By clearly noticing their presence, can you overcome any of the ways in which these interfere with, or inhibit, whatever activities you need to do?

Recommended Reading:

Mindfulness In Plain English by Ven. Henepola Gunaratana
http://www.urbandharma.org/pdf/mindfulness_in_plain_english.pdf

4th Week – Mindfulness of Thoughts

by Gil Fronsdal

Sometimes people think that the point of meditation is to stop thinking -- to have a silent mind. This does happen occasionally, but it is not necessarily the point of meditation. Thoughts are an important part of life, and mindfulness practice is not supposed to be a struggle against them. It's more useful to be friends with our thoughts than thinking them unfortunate distractions. In mindfulness, we are not stopping thoughts as much as overcoming any preoccupation we have with them.

Mindfulness is not thinking about things. (It is not "meditating on" some topic, as people often say.) It is a non-discursive observation of our life in all its aspects. In those moments when thinking predominates, mindfulness is the clear and silent awareness that we are thinking. I found it helpful and relaxing when someone said, "For the purpose of meditation, nothing is particularly worth thinking about." Thoughts can come and go as they wish, and the meditator does not need to become involved with them. We are not interested in engaging in the content of our thoughts; mindfulness of thinking is simply recognizing we are thinking.

In meditation, when thoughts are subtle and in the background, or when random thoughts pull you away from awareness of the present, it is enough to resume mindfulness of breathing. However, when your preoccupation with thoughts is stronger than your ability to easily let go of them, then direct your mindfulness to being clearly aware that thinking is occurring.

Strong bouts of thinking are fuelled largely by identification and preoccupation with thoughts. By clearly observing our thinking, we step outside the field of identification. Thinking will usually then soften to a calm and unobtrusive stream.

Sometimes thinking can be strong and compulsive even while we are aware of it. When this happens, it can be useful to notice how such thinking is affecting your body, physically and energetically. It may cause pressure in the head, tension in the forehead, tightness of the shoulders, or a buzzing as if the head were filled with thousands of bumblebees. Let your mindfulness feel the sensations of tightness, pressure, or whatever you discover. It is easy to be caught up in the story of these preoccupying thoughts, but if you feel the physical sensation of thinking, then you are bringing attention to the present moment rather than the story line of the thoughts.

When a particular theme keeps reappearing in our thinking, it is likely that it is being triggered by a strong emotion. In that case, no matter how many times you recognize a repeated thought or concern, come back to the breath. If the associated emotion isn't recognized, the concern is liable to keep reappearing. For example, people who plan a lot, often find that planning thoughts arise out of apprehension. If they do not acknowledge the fear, the fear will be a factory of new planning thoughts.

If there is a repetitive thought pattern, see if you can discover an emotion associated with it, and then practise mindfulness of the emotion. Ground yourself in the present moment in the emotion itself. When you acknowledge the emotion, often it will cease generating those particular thoughts.

Thoughts are a huge part of our lives. Many of us spend much time inhabiting the cognitive world of stories and ideas. Mindfulness practice won't stop the thinking, but it will help prevent us from compulsively following thoughts that have appeared. This will help us become more balanced, so our physical, emotional and cognitive sides all work together as a whole.

Mindfulness exercises for the fourth week

1. For the remaining two weeks of this class, extend your daily meditation session to 30 minutes.

For at least the first ten minutes, keep your meditation simple -- focus on the breath. To the best of your ability, when some other experience gets in the way of being with the breath, simply let it go and come back to the breath. After this ten-minute warm-up period, switch to more open mindfulness. This means continuing with the breath until something else becomes more compelling. When physical sensations, emotions or thinking predominate, let go of the breath and focus your meditative awareness on these. When nothing else is compelling, come back to the breathing.

2. Spend some time reflecting on the assumptions, attitudes and beliefs you have about your thoughts. Do you usually assume that they are either true false, right or wrong? Do you identify with your thoughts? That is, do you think that what you think defines who you are? Do you believe that your thinking will solve your problems or that it is the only means to understand something? After you have reflected on this on your own, have a conversation with someone about what you have discovered.

3. Once during the next week, spend a two-hour period tracking the kinds of things you think about. Find some way to remind yourself every few minutes to notice what you are thinking. Are the thoughts primarily self-referential or primarily about others? Do they tend to be critical or judgmental? What is the frequency of thoughts of "should" or "ought"? Are the thoughts mostly directed to the future, to the past, or toward fantasy? Do you tend more toward optimistic thoughts or pessimistic ones? Do your thoughts tend to be apprehensive or peaceful? Contented or dissatisfied?

This is not an exercise in judging what you notice, but in simply noticing. Most people live in their thoughts. This is a two-hour exercise in regularly and frequently stepping outside of the thought stream to take up residence, albeit briefly, in a mindful awareness that is bigger than the thinking mind.

4. Once during the next week, spend a two-hour period giving particular attention to your intentions. Before we speak or act there is always an impulse of motivation or intention. Notice the various kinds of desires and aversions that fuel your intentions. For this exercise, you might choose a period where you can go about some ordinary activity in a quiet and mostly undisturbed way. You might even slow your activities down some so that you are more likely to notice and evaluate your motivations.

Source:

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5th Week – Mindfulness of the Mind

by Gil Fronsdal

Now that we have practised with mindfulness of the breath, body, emotions and thoughts in previous weeks, the new instruction is to turn the attention around and notice the mind itself. Not just the content of the mind in terms of particular feelings or thoughts, but the quality of the mind; the mood of the mind; the state of the mind.

Sometimes it is not easy to notice the overall state of the mind because we are focusing so much on the details of what is happening during mindfulness practice. This often can be the case in daily life as well, especially when we are preoccupied with what we want or don't want. It is like focusing on the details of driving while noticing neither how dirty the windshield is nor the strain of looking through the dirt. Part of mindfulness practice is to step back from the details of what we are experiencing in order to notice the subjective feeling of being aware. So, for example, does our awareness or our mind feel contracted or spacious, tense or relaxed, scattered or focused?

States of the mind are closely connected with our mood or attitude. Whether subtle or strong they have a pervasive quality that is more lasting than particular thoughts or impulses of the mind. For example, angry thoughts sometimes may appear briefly without affecting our mood. In contrast, an angry state of mind can shape our entire demeanour. While in an angry mood, not all our thoughts may be angry. However, the mood can linger as a background for whatever we are experiencing, sometimes significantly colouring our perception of things.

For some people, this background attitude is at the heart of what motivates their life. All too often it is closely connected to people's suffering. When they are not aware of the influence their attitude has, people can feel trapped in their suffering. An attitude or mood can create a bias in how we see our experience. Moods of desire or aversion can influence us one way, moods of generosity or friendliness another way. When we are clearly aware of our mood we are less likely to be unduly influenced by it.

If we do not notice the underlying attitude it can fester and build up stress and tension in our lives. The attitude may only cause relatively mild tension or stress in any given moment, but if it is chronically reinforced, then the tension can become great and lead to greater suffering. In becoming mindful of attitude it is useful to distinguish between what is happening at any given moment and what our relationship is to what is happening. Mindfulness practice helps to tease these apart so that we can be more discerning about how our opinions, judgments, attitudes and feelings may or may not accurately represent what is happening. The space between what is happening and our relationship to what is happening is a door to peace.

The suffering and stress that mindfulness practice is meant to help address is less about how things are and more about our relationship to how things are. Fortunately freedom is not as much about what is happening in the world or within us, but more about how much freedom we have in relating to what is happening.

Meditation instruction: Mindfulness of the mind

1. During meditation periodically ask yourself what is your relationship to what is happening. For example, you may feel some discomfort. Be mindful of your relationship to the discomfort. Are you clinging or resisting? Are you relaxed, generous, or kind towards the discomfort? Once you notice the relationship, hold it in the warmth of your attention. Once you have done this, you can investigate some of the present-moment elements of how you are relating. How does it affect your breathing? Are there any physical sensations or emotions associated with it? What are your beliefs behind it? Also, as you notice the relationship, ask yourself if that

relationship or attitude represents a way you want to be or whether it contributes to a sense of dissatisfaction or dis-ease.

Also, remember that there is no need for judging, criticizing or being upset with what we see when we look at our relationship to the present moment, even if what we see is unfortunate or difficult. Similarly, there is no need to praise or get involved with fortunate or preferred attitudes. In either case, the practice is to be mindful of the relationship or attitude without being for it or against it. This practice then allows the relationship or attitude to settle or relax.

2. Periodically notice the general state of your mind. Does it feel tired or alert, contracted or expanded, calm or agitated, fuzzy or clear, resistant or eager, pushing forward or pulling back? Putting aside whatever commentary or judgments you might have about the state of your mind, use your mindfulness to become more aware of the state. What emotions come with it? What is its felt sense? What relationship is there between your mind state and how your body feels? What does it feel like to step back and observe the state of mind rather than be in it? What happens to your state of mind as you are mindful of it?

Mindfulness exercises for the fifth week

1. Choose an activity you do on a daily basis. This can be driving to work, preparing breakfast, reading email, etc. For one week each time you do this chosen activity become aware of your state of mind. How does your state of mind influence how you relate to the activity?

Keep a log of your changing states over the week and compare the role your mind state has on how you do the activity.

2. Consider what ordinary activity you do that helps you have a good state of mind. During this week, do this activity more often and become more mindful of what this state of mind is like physically, emotionally and cognitively. Explore how you might realistically

maintain this state of mind after you have finished the activity that tends to bring it on.

3. Have a conversation with a good friend (or complete stranger if that is easier) about what might be the most common attitudes that you operate under. How do these attitudes influence what you do, how you see life, and how you relate to yourself? How do you tend to relate to people who have similar attitudes to your most common ones?

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6th Week – Building on the foundation

by Gil Fronsdal

Sometimes a metaphor can be useful for clarifying and reinforcing the instructions for mindfulness meditation. A classic Buddhist metaphor for a human being is a one-room house with five windows and a door. The windows and door represent the six senses posited by Buddhism: the five primary senses we have in the West plus a sixth sense which perceives what goes on in our minds, our thoughts. Imagine that you are in the middle of the house sitting in an easy chair, relaxed and at ease with nothing to do. The windows are open and the door is open.

A cat peeks its head in the door and then goes away. Soon a bird lands on the windowsill and then flies away and then a squirrel runs by. Various animals come and go. Rather than getting up to follow the animal outside or closing the doors and windows, you could stay in our easy chair and simply watch what comes and goes. The instructions for mindfulness meditation is to just stay in the easy chair of awareness and let sensations, emotions, thoughts or attitudes simply appear at the door or window of our sense perceptions. We notice them come and go. The emphasis is on being at ease. We are not trying to force our meditation to become anything. You are encouraged to remain focused on breathing but when compelling experiences come to awareness, neither get involved with them nor close your awareness to them. Explore how to be easefully aware.

Developing mindfulness is a way of living a skilful life. Life can then unfold a lot better, with a lot less stress, and more sense of freedom and wisdom. Once the basic instructions for mindfulness are understood, one can build on this foundation. The two primary ways of doing this are (1) Practicing mindfulness in daily life and (2) Developing more concentration with the mindfulness.

Mindfulness in daily life

As in meditation, it is possible to develop greater presence and awareness in our daily lives.

Some people find it useful to have cues throughout the day that remind them to notice what is happening in the present, i.e. what they are doing, feeling, or thinking. A common cue is the phone ringing. Rather than rushing to immediately answer the phone, the ringing is a prompt to be mindful. This is also a great way to prepare for the phone conversation.

Some people use walking through doorways as a mindfulness cue. Whenever they walk through a doorway into a different room they notice and pay attention to what is happening with themselves and in the new room. Waiting for traffic lights to turn green can be another cue for a bit of mindfulness.

It can also be useful to bring a heightened mindfulness to particular daily tasks. Some people do this by choosing to eat one meal a day in silence without doing anything else besides eating.

Others will do mindfulness while walking – some people will park in a distant parking place so to have a short period of walking meditation. Cleaning can also be a great time to cultivate mindfulness.

A fascinating area for mindfulness is during a conversation. Much can be discovered by listening more actively and tracking one's internal responses and impulses during the conversation.

The qualities needed to listen well are the same qualities needed to meditate well.

CONCENTRATION

The second way to build on the foundation of our mindfulness is to develop greater concentration. Concentration helps provide steadiness and strength to mindfulness. If mindfulness is a telescope then concentration is the tripod that gives stability to the telescope so we can see more clearly.

One way to develop concentration is with regularity of practice. One of the most important things is just practicing every day, day after day. Just as young children benefit from routine and repetition in learning, the mind benefits from regularity of practice.

Another way to develop concentration is going on meditation retreats. This allows us to step out of our lives so we can get a better perspective and perhaps better let go of the regular concerns that often entangle us. Retreats are a time to meditate frequently throughout the day and so get more settled than meditating once a day at home. It can be a great delight to have many of our preoccupations fall away. We can make an analogy of living on the Peninsula and not really being aware of the air quality, then one day, the air is crystal clear and we can see the Mt. Hamilton range across the bay. It is so refreshing to suddenly have that clarity. We didn't realize what we were missing because we were so accustomed to the smoggy air. To be really present and not have the mind be murky, foggy or distracted is one of the great delights of life.

This happens slowly over time if we practise everyday at home, but it happens quicker and deeper when we go on retreat. If we're new to meditation we don't necessarily want to go on retreat right away, but to start doing a regular practice. If we meditate regularly at some point we will probably feel that we would like to do more and then we might consider a retreat. IMC offers many retreats throughout the year. At our Redwood City centre we offer daylong retreats monthly. In addition, about six times a year we offer residential retreats that last from two days to two weeks in length at other locations in the Bay Area.

WISDOM

Mindfulness coupled with concentration helps with the unfolding of what Buddhism calls wisdom. Wisdom happens when we are present for our lives and see through our concepts, ideas or judgments and instead understand the bigger picture and context of what's happening.

Some of the concepts or judgments we use are innocent and appropriate enough. However, some concepts bring with them much suffering. Part of the function of mindfulness is to help us cut through all the concepts, interpretations, and "shoulds" so we can see more clearly. And the more clearly we see, the more choices we will discover for living a wise and satisfying life.

Another function of mindfulness is to reveal the difference between the stress of clinging and the peace of releasing that clinging. An important part of wisdom is then learning how to act with this knowledge so that we become more peaceful and more free.

Source:

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Living for today – Quotes

“Today is a gift from God - that is why it is called the present.”
(Sri Ravi Shankar, Celebrating Silence: Excerpts from Five Years of Weekly Knowledge 1995-2000)

Live today love today yesterdays gone and tomorrow may never come don't waste your time in the past and don't wish for the future make it happen today. (Nishan Panwar)

Remember the past, plan for the future, but live for today, because yesterday is gone and tomorrow may never come. (Luke)

Never forget yesterday, but always live for today...Because you never know what tomorrow can bring, or what it can take away...
(Anonymous)

Live for today, love for tomorrow, and laugh at all your yesterdays. Never regret the past, always hope for the future, and cherish every moment you have. (Nishan Panwar)

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning. (Albert Einstein)

Don't let the shadows of yesterday spoil the sunshine of tomorrow. Live for today. (Nandina Morris)

Every day we try to live and do better and try to encourage and inspire people to do better. That’s all we can do: live for today. (Vanessa Simmons)

Why look behind you, you can't change it. Why fret over the future, it's not here. Why don't you live for today, and make it so wonderful it's worth remembering. (Nishan Panwar)

Live each day as if it were your last because tomorrow may never come. (Anonymous)

Stop thinking about the past, and don't worry too much about what's going to happen in the future. Your presence is a present, so live for today, and appreciate everyone and everything you have. Stop thinking about what you don't have, what you wish you had, who walked out of your life, and whatever else that falls in that category. Think about what you have, who you have in your life, and how fortunate you are. (Junethea Crystal Centeno)

Don't let your fear of the past affect the presence of your future. Live for what tomorrow has to bring, not what yesterday has taken away. (Anonymous)

Make everyday count, appreciate and cherish every moment and grab everything you possibly can because you may never be able to experience it again. (Kemmy Nola)

Remember to always say what you mean. If you love someone, tell them. Don't be afraid to express yourself. Reach out and tell someone what they mean to you. Because when you decide that it is the right time, it might be too late later. Seize the day. Never have regrets. And most importantly, stay close to your friends and family, for they have helped make you The person that you are today! (Anonymous)

"The timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness. And knows that yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream." (Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet)

“At any given moment the choice to be happy is present- we just have to choose to be happy.” (Steve Maraboli, Life, the Truth, and Being Free)

“Make the choice to embrace this day. Do not let your TODAY be stolen by the ghost of yesterday or the "To-Do" list of tomorrow! It’s inspiring to see all the wonderfully amazing things that can happen in a day in which you participate.” (Steve Maraboli, Life, the Truth, and Being Free)

So little girl now don't you run and hide.
I know that you've been hurt before
But don't you be afraid no more.
Throw off the chains that bind
And leave the past behind;
When love comes knocking at your door.
(Neil Sedaka and Carole Bayer - The Monkees)

Sources:

http://www.searchquotes.com/search/Live_For_Today_Because_Tomorrow_May_Never_Come/1/

http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/today

I BELIEVE IN LIFE
BEFORE DEATH